Determinants of Health

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The five major determinants of health are biology and genetics (examples being sex and age), a person’s individual behavior (which extends to smoking, unprotected sex and alcohol use), a social environment, physical environment (where a person stays), and health services in terms of accessibility, quality and cost. Over 75% of all the deaths in the U.S can be attributed to ten main causes, where the top three account for about 50% of the deaths. These major causes are heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, accidents, stroke, Alzheimer’s, diabetes, pneumonia, kidney disease and suicide winds up the list (Olsen, 2017). All these diseases can be attributed in one way or the other to the five major determinants of health mentioned above.

In the year 2015, 50% of individuals who were above the age of 18 years failed to meet the required minimums when it comes to aerobic physical activity. An additional 79% failed to adequately meet the basic recommendations when it comes to aerobic and basic muscle-strengthening physical activity. The scariest thing is that 1 in every 3 adults, tends to suffer from at least one type of cardiovascular disease. This accounts for about 92.1 million people. This can be attributed to some of the dietary choices one has from an early age e.g. 90% of all Americans who are aged above 2 years tend to consume too much sodium, which in the end increases their risk for high blood pressure (Kim, 2011). An estimated population of 15% of the United States population were smoking in the year 2015, which accounts for about 36.5 million individuals. It should be taken into note that smoking accounts for more than 480,000 deaths every year (Kim, 2011). When it comes to alcohol abuse, alcohol causes about 88,000 deaths every year, where more than half of these deaths are caused by binge drinking.

All of these chronic diseases are preventable through either change of behavior i.e. quitting smoking, or accessing quality healthcare within the required time where preventive measures can be taken together with support from the surrounding community which is critical when it comes to fighting off stigma that is associated with these conditions. The various complex ways that American families acquire healthcare tends to obscure the impact of health care costs (Kim, 2011). Most American families today are forced to utilize a substantial amount of their income on healthcare, and even despite this, they cannot be guaranteed quality care. This makes it hard for the various chronic diseases to be detected at an early stage and be treated before they have reached a stage of no return.

When it comes to biology and genetics which extends to sex and age, chronic diseases also show a huge a correlation with these determinants. For example, when ADL was assessed in a cross section of older adults, it was shown to increase with age, whereby, the oldest were the most disabled. Additionally, the less educated elderly men and women showed more disability than their educated counterparts. This study by Il-Ho Kim in 2013, was able to show that with only a few exceptions, that the prevalence of chronic diseases was higher among elderly women when compared to elderly men. This high prevalence among the elderly women has been attributed mainly to two reasons i.e. a lower recovery rate than the elderly men and probably a lower mortality rate.

As discussed above, we can appreciate that despite the chronic illnesses contributing to the most number of deaths in the U.S, these diseases can be managed if effective mechanism and favorable policies are implemented. This will facilitate early detection and comprehensive treatment to follow without a patient being limited by finances or any other reason.

References

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