Public Policy and Social Determinants of Health

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A public policy refers to a given guide to action based on a particular set of principles that is usually drawn up by administrative branches of a state. Public policies cover a myriad of issues whose solutions is consistent with the institutional customs and law. Thus, its foundation lies in the national legislation that is stated in the constitution and the regulations stipulated by statute. The public health sector is one of the areas where public policies cover since many issues arise which are related to health and which need to be addressed in a constitutional way. Empirical studies have shown how many factors research included influence the practice and policy decisions that revolve around health (Paula Braveman, 2014)

The importance of public health has been seen over the years through the increasing responsibilities it has. Historically public health has been known largely for the contribution it has made towards the control and the reduction of various infectious diseases and the different efforts that have been made as I witnessed during the time I volunteered in the community. These efforts included action such as hygienic practices, environmental sanitation such as securing safe water and air, elimination of polio and small pox through immunization and reduction of overcrowding particularly in urban slum settings (Paula Braveman, 2014). As infectious diseases were replaced by chronic diseases as one of the leading causes of death, the focus of public health shifted more on health promotion practices such as changing the diet, abstaining from tobacco abuse, exercising to help avert contemporary threats related to health such as type two diabetes obesity and cardiovascular disease. Recently natural disasters such as hurricanes and the spread of acute respiratory syndrome, terrorist attack that are biological, radiological or chemical has to lead to the public health sector assuming a central role in addressing such issues that have emerged.

Social determinants of health effect to the conditions that are existent in the environment in which people live and are born in and which in turn affect the state of their healthy, quality of life outcomes, functioning and risks. Conditions such as economic, social and physical that are existent in environments such as church, workplaces, school, and neighborhood have been referred to as attributes of place. These characteristics together with the sense of security and social engagement patterns and the well-being of a person are also affected and determined by where people live. Resources that lead to the enhancement of people’s quality of lives have an effect on the health outcomes of the population (Paula Braveman, 2014). Such resources include affordable and safe housing, public safety, access to education, healthy food availability, environments that are free of toxins and local emergency or health services. By establishing policies that influence economic and social conditions in a positive way and that support individual changes in behaviors the state of health can be improved for masses in sustainable ways.

Health begins in our immediate settings which include homes, workplaces, schools, communities, and neighbors. Health is promoted by a variety of factors and situations that revolve around self-care such as maintaining the proper diet, exercising, getting recommended immunizations and seeking medical attention when unwell. These health practices are determined by a variety of factors such as one's accessibility to economic and social opportunities, and the quality of education one has received. Also, resources that are available in our communities, homes and neighborhoods, workplace safety, cleanliness of the food water and air people access, nature and quality of social relationships and social interactions.

The conditions and situations people live under mostly determine why some people are healthier than others and why some can be cured of certain diseases faster than others. Also, why some areas have certain diseases that are prevalent bordering on becoming an epidemic while others are not disturbed by the same strain of illness ("Latest News | Page 16 | Gwen Moore for U.S. Congress", 2016).

In light of these factors the accessibility to health care facilities and resources is a major concern that is essential in promoting health and which Senator Gwen Margolis has taken up the initiative of being in the forefront in initiating the bill that encourages access to health care which promotes the ultimate health of the constituents. The policy states that the categories of persons prescribing to brand name drugs under a given prescription of an individual drug program should be expounded when it is medically necessary. In turn requires a hospital to provide notice that is specified to obstetrical physicians’ way before it closes its department or providence if obstetrical services cease. Thus, the Board of nurses is also required to establish a group which forms the committee that is to recommend a formula of substances that is controlled that should be prescribed on a limited or frequent basis by a nurse practitioner who is advanced. Individual health insurers are required to use certain forms before being issued with an authorization form that is approved by financial services commission which leases in consultation with the agency for health care and administration. Thus having the elected official handles matters about health accessibility in a detailed and precise manner and which gives a definite and structured role of the health practitioners involved provides the proper initiative that addresses the social determinants of health for health. ("Toolkit Home", 2016)

The volunteer experience in the community provided a framework for a deeper understanding of the social determinants of health and the influence of public policy on health matters. The duties that I was engaged in included providing operational care before and after the procedures were conducted by the physician, writing records, organizing workloads, supervising the staff that was junior to be given role. Also, planning and assessing equipment that is used administering and monitoring intravenous and medication infusions as well as taking the patient's temperatures, samples, blood pressures and pulses. As a result of these responsibilities and duties, a lot was brought to my attention including the conditions and situations that encourage people to have health seeking behavior as well as their accessibility to medical care when they do seek care. The policy issue that is important to Senator Gwen is mainly access to health care which is affected by some problems.

The differences that exist in access to healthcare in different populations are the main area of concern for healthcare provision disparities. The biggest problem revolves around economic and social factors in a govern community, neighborhood or family. Some of the factors that contribute to the existing problem include, lack of financial resources which affects most minority populations, irregular source of care which also mostly affects minorities. Lack of a regular healthcare source means people have a hard time attending an appointment and obtaining prescriptions. Legal obstacles such as those that immigrants experience may be a barrier to accessing healthcare since they cannot get the necessary certification to seek medical help, lack of healthcare practitioners and providers that meet the growing demand of people who need medical assistance. In places where minority groups are concentrated the specialists available and the resources that are used for diagnosis are usually inadequate.

Structural barriers are also a factor these include lengthy waiting times, the inability for one to have appointment times that are convenient and lack of transport to health care facilities ("Toolkit Home", 2016).

Given the impending issues related to access to healthcare Senator Gwen is passionate about making the health care services available for all people despite their economic or social conditions and situations. Her agenda is geared towards providing quality health care to everyone to foster a community that is protected in matters regarding health and who can be fully productive without being slowed down by concerns that revolve around health issues.

As discussed above the minority groups are the ones who are mainly affected when it comes to accessing medical care for a varied number of reasons that have also been discussed above. They include reasons such as lack of legal documentation to acquire authorization of other health documents such as a Medicare that would enable the patient to have limited access to proper health care. The financial limitation is also a glaring issue for the minority groups and the populations who are stricken by poetry. Some diseases and illnesses arise due to the environmental situation that they are in such as being in an overcrowded place without access to clean water, air, and food. In turn, people fall ill and are not able to obtain medical assistance in time, and they do succumb to the illness at times given that they cannot reach the doctor in record time. The long quest and substandard medicine that is offered in the healthcare facilities that are in crowded areas, as well as sectors that are occupied by the minority group, also presents a concern for their health status. Some do no seek medical attention altogether based on their experience of not being able to access the proper and expected help in time to arrest the disease that an individual faces ("Latest News | Page 16 | Gwen Moore for U.S. Congress", 2016).

The bill initiated by Senator Gwen addresses the issue of prescription and how it is to be handled by health practitioners in regards to accessibility of health services by people.

It has been amended several times, and the bill would handle matters related to accessibility of health care in a definitive way especially in regards to the prescription of drugs and the practitioners involved as well as their expected role in how to handle the given issue at hand.

**References**

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