

# Good Health as Engine Room of Human Productivity and Performance

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## Abstract

Health promotion saves lives and sets the standard for quality living, which is to the benefit of organizations and individuals in society. Most deaths and poor living conditions around the world are linked to health challenges. Individuals and organizations can only meet and improve performance and productivity targets if health is in good shape. This paper examines the need for health promotion around the world with particular reference to developing countries where the health systems are not robust enough to address emerging deadly tropical diseases. The paper adopts a thematic method, focusing on World Health Organization strategies, and ecological approach to health promotion. Evidence is shown of fall in gross domestic product (GDP) as a result of productive people's dwindling health and physical incapacitation, owing to health challenges. Conclusion of the paper embraces the projection of personal responsibility for individual and community health. The article also validates the theoretical assumption that health is wealth, and both human performance and productivity are hinged on adherence to health promotion protocols. In recommendation, the paper highlights, among others the proposal for a stronger collaborative synergy between health advocacy groups and governments to promote health education in rural and urban areas.

**Key words: Health, organization, performance, productivity, protocol.**

## 1. Introduction

Health is a primary asset for every individual across the world. Health has implications for human productivity and performance in any activity. Indeed, good human health is essential for the survival and sustainability of individuals and corporate organizations. Healthy human beings make organizations effective and efficient (Akpunonu & Egenuka, 2021). But once they exhibit health issues, it affects the organizational drive towards the attainment of corporate objectives. In many cases, ill health attracts cost implications for individuals, organizations and governments. From the above, the plausibility for good health promotion is evident. It, however, dictates the formulation of good public health policies, programs and establishment of health institutions with the primary responsibility of providing health care services and public health education.

Health is the springboard of life, and good health is critical to productivity and human performance in any human endeavor. When carefully examined, improved life expectancy is a function of good health habits and living right according to the standards of medical experts. Failure to abide by good health standards is invitation to diseases. If uncontrolled, this is ultimate license to sickness and death. The World Health Organization (WHO) since its inception has continually advocated and planned programs for human wellness and good health across the globe (WHO, 2020). Wellness extends to, and covers proper mental functioning, stable mind, and harmony in the functioning of every organ of the body. Wellness arises from balance in consumption pattern and physical use of the body. But across the world, there are health issues and challenges which affect human productivity and performance with attendant cost implications for the state.

The human body is so complex and well-organized that self-discipline is required for its maintenance. Its state of balance is the subject of health in this context. But anything to the contrary tilts towards disharmony and pains. Poor health maintenance is also invitation to diseases (Cohen, 2017). However, maintenance of the human body alone is insufficient to bring about good health. In particular, the residential environment needs good hygiene.

Medical health is diverse as each organ of the body constitutes a major area of medical study. In the main, primary health is justifiable as the starting point to understand the rudiments of good health. It is explicit that there is need across the world to promote personal, family and community health.

Human efforts, skills, knowledge and ability can only translate to productivity and performance if humans are in good health. Sound mind is the product of good health, balanced naturally to function accordingly. Man's efforts, culminating in productivity and performance, are captured in some ways either directly or indirectly in the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). Significant losses or reduction of the GDP occurs when people are unable to work as a result of poor health. The human body is complex, requiring systematic attention every day, and such attention, if not given, activates imbalance.

Considering the loss of lives and implications for gross domestic product (GDP) of any nation where health is not given continuous priority, the need for health promotion is brought to the fore in this paper since good health is akin to the engine room of productivity and performance. The essay is organized, showing seven items in the following order. Item one is the introduction. Item two dwells on conceptualizing health promotion while item three is centered on strategic approaches adopted by the World Health Organization. Item four explores the ecological approach. Item five indicates the limitation of the essay and item six highlights the knowledge gained by the writer from the study. Finally, item seven makes conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Conceptualizing Health Promotion

Health is the state of human balance in relation to interaction with the environment. However, it is also an activity to be achieved. Implicitly, it requires some actions. In essence, it has to be enhanced. This gives birth to the concept of health promotion. Health promotion is therefore a series of organized activities directed at regulating people's public and private health culture in an attempt at preventing diseases and ill-health such as may endanger life. Health promotion extends into a range of environmental interventions that incorporate curative ailment management, mental rehabilitation and health habit behavioral changes to sustain population health (Woodall, 2020). It suggests that responsible actions should be taken to improve health standards. Studies have revealed that new medical findings recommend actions that help individuals and all health system stakeholders to uphold and adopt strategies to sustain their health status.

Health may be defined as the state in which an individual enjoys balanced mental, physical and social wellbeing (Anugwom, 2020; Godwin, 2020). Owing to lack of complete health knowledge, millions of people are exposed to the burden of a variety of diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, cancer, measles, respiratory infections and diverse types of communicable and non-communicable diseases (Afshari, Mustafari, Keshvari & Ghahnariye, 2016). Because of the scourge of most of these diseases, strategies are adopted to save the population from death and physical impairment of organs. Consequently, there is no limit to modern day examples of health promotion strategies. A number of health promotion activities are depicted in Table 1 as shown.

**Table 2.1: Health Promotion Programs**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of breastfeeding</li> <li>• First aid management</li> <li>• Physical and health education</li> <li>• Family planning advocacy</li> <li>• Enlightenment on the prevention of cancer</li> <li>• Child immunization program</li> <li>• Campaign against malaria in tropical Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental sanitation</li> <li>• WHO-assisted Polio eradication program</li> <li>• Vaccine production for the treatment of meningitis</li> <li>• National Health Insurance Scheme</li> <li>• Preventive healthcare initiatives</li> <li>• Initiatives against Lassa fever, Ebola and other outbreak of epidemics</li> </ul>
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**Source:** Compilation from various sources of *Population Health Review*

Health promotion, as conceived, implies the understanding that everyone should have a responsibility for the maintenance of personal hygiene, and to seek medical help for serious medical cases (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Muanya, 2020). With exposure to knowledge of common hygiene, people should be able to treat at the primary or first aid level common health problems at home or elsewhere. Basic health care encompasses knowledge of prevention of diseases, treatment and education. In many countries, the ministry of health and other allied medical agencies are engaged in running health programs and policies as part of the campaign to promote public health.

At the heart of every health program is the objective of ensuring that people receive efficient and satisfactory health services that could keep their health in good condition. In developing countries in particular, existing health facilities are in a state of crisis (Muanya, 2020; Muanya & Osayande, 2020). Owing to the relative high level of poverty, most people cannot afford medical care services. There is also evidence of living in poor conditions. Health care cost is high. The need arises to educate the rural populace on proper (healthy) living. Evidently, the key to good health promotion is hygiene education (Barberis, Myles, Ault, Brugazzi & Martin, 2016). In many countries, government has intervened in health promotion through the initiative of national health insurance policy.

### Figure 2.1: Health Insurance Program



Source: *The Guardian* Vol.37, No. 15,351 (2021)

While the policy is good, its adoption in Nigeria as a case in point is fraught with inconsistencies, and lack of funds. Evidently, the poor in rural areas have no access to it. The poorer segment of the population across the world is not usually privileged to have access to quality health services unlike the affluent. The public health policy and system are designed to correct this imbalance, to help increase life expectancy and to reduce infant mortality. Introduction of the national health insurance scheme is another strategy in the alleviation of health cost constraints. The national health insurance coverage is supposed to relieve citizens of the burden of high cost of medical services and emergency health expenditure (Anugwom, 2020). It is designed to be a feature of the public health system. Public health system is crucial for which government has a critical role to play (Southwell, Kelly, Bann, Squiers, Ray & McCormack, 2020). Government's effectiveness is also measured by the role it plays in the health system and its impact on people's health. Health is critical to poverty alleviation in poor and developing countries. Only healthy people can participate in work to earn a living.

Consequently, to keep people healthy, they must have access to affordable or subsidized health care services. People who are physically incapacitated, and are poor rely on public-funded health facilities (Pezeshki, Alizadeh & Nkpajouh, 2019). Health of the general population is government's national policy priority and responsibility. In countries where epidemics, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other life-threatening plagues ravage lives, governments are concerned as much as economic investment is equally under serious threat (Southwell *et al.*, 2020). Health is therefore tied to development in all its facets for the fact that a healthy population is only a prerequisite for sustainable development (Todaro & Smith, 2011).

Outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019, and its spread around the world for most part of 2020, is suggestive of the imperative of health promotion, preventive culture and internalization of personal responsibility for good living. Most governments around the world have embarked on intensive publicity campaign via several social media to

compel citizens to apply COVID-19 protocols (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). These initiatives signify the need for strict commitment to health maintenance and disease prevention protocols.

### 3. Strategic Approach of the World Health Organization

Health is of global concern for which the World Health Organization (WHO), since formation, has taken the mandate for education, collaborative intervention, research and preventive policies. WHO in its agenda considers policy making as critical to actions that drive health care in communities across the world (Klompas, Baker & Rhee, 2020). Health promotion is thus an inclusive process that spells out ownership of responsibility for health awareness, prevention of health issues, and motivation for access to available health facilities (Anugwom, 2020). Health is beyond living in a state of good physical, mental, and social harmony. It is a dispensation that demonstrates ability to cope with challenges of the environment without impairing the mental, biological and psychological state of the individual concerned (Southwell *et al.*, 2020). In the light of the above, health promotion is the conglomeration of programs designed to prevent diseases, reduce risk factors where diseases already exist, and imbibe lifestyles that consistently enable good health (Woodall, 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been instrumental in advocating quality health across the globe, adopting in several nations interventionist programs and research into diseases and drug production (Todaro & Smith, 2011). WHO (2016) is concerned about good governance for health, health literacy and healthy cities as elements which should promote quality health in the world. From the perspective of WHO, health promotion across communities and the entire world is deemed a concerted effort by individuals, governments, non-governmental organizations and international bodies to participate in health activities that modify behavioral changes in health matters. Most studies (Rains, Crane, Iyengar, Merchant, Oxnam & Sprinkle, 2020) have cited the WHO Charter definition copiously as a strong reflection of the practical need for health promotion, involving the acceptable health practices. WHO views health promotion as a process which tends to empower people to exercise control over their health as well as improve on it as situations may demand.

Studies are available, revealing scientific evidence that hypertension, diabetes mellitus and cancer are most prevalent in low and middle income countries (Afshari *et al.*, 2016; Barberis *et al.*, 2016). These ailments account for the rising cases of morbidity and mortality, suggesting that governments and health authorities have exigent responsibility to devise intervention strategies at screening, vaccination, and treatment to stem further spread to vulnerable segments of the population (Akpunonu, 2020). In recent times, WHO observed that non-communicable diseases characterized by cardiovascular diseases, and chronic respiratory diseases need vital responsiveness by medical and research authorities. This is critical by virtue of the rapid mortality rate of these diseases. Medical researchers now acknowledge that primary health care offers an effective strategy to curb disability, morbidity and mortality (Muanya & Osayande, 2020).

For effective health promotion in any country, coherent policies and guidelines are essential, and should be the parameter for action and anticipated health behavior from the populace (Afshari, Mustafari, Keshvari & Ghahnaviye, 2016). Indulgence in unhealthy lifestyle is contributory to health problems. This then implies that consumption habit should be disciplined enough, following a healthy attitude. Health issues are multidimensional and complex, but a regime of activities which promote wellness could keep the individual in a state of balanced health. Evidence has also revealed that over consumption of alcohol is known to result in disorder of the liver, brain, heart, lung, and intestine (Muanya, 2020; Kumar & Preetha, 2012).

**Photo 1: Treatment of a Patient**

Source: *The Guardian* Vol.37, No. 15,351 (2021)

In photo 1 above is the treatment of a patient by a medical expert, signifying response to medical issues and access to health care services. However, not many rural dwellers in Africa have access to medical treatment in spite of government's health policy and acknowledgement of the efforts of WHO. Several parameters, one of which is health-system responsiveness to patients' health issues, have been developed by the World Health Organization (Kumar & Preetha, 2012). These parameters can be used to assess the state of health in countries. Where a nation's ranking or status on the health-system responsiveness scale is low, this by implication indicates that more efforts are required to promote health.

#### 4. Ecological Approach to Health Promotion

Different approaches to health promotion have been examined in literature, and recommended. But each has its peculiarities, and authorities have reasons for adopting any approach. However, this paper considers strongly the ecological model of health promotion because good health is a function of man's interaction with the immediate environment.

**Figure 4.1: Ecological Model of Health Promotion**



Figure 4.1 is characteristic of the environment or society, reflecting human ecology. Five critical elements surrounding health and its conduct in society are conveyed on the pyramid. At the apex of the pyramid is public health policy which gives direction, health culture and expectations by the state. Each of the items on the pyramid exerts a measure of health influence on individuals in the society. The absence of any one model element has strong negative implications for individuals and community health status (Muanya, 2020). For instance, community health with regulatory demands shapes how people in the community observe health rules and response to treatment where necessary. Health authorities may dictate isolation or confinement of patients with chronic/infectious diseases to prevent others from being infected (Rains *et al.*, 2020). In the same vein, health institutions, guided by and responding to public health policies, conduct hygiene education to safeguard community and personal health through various means by which members of the public may be conveniently reached.

Poor sanitation practices, for instance, may arise from personal individual attitude, owing to ignorance. Poor sanitation has been traced to lack of proper education on health standards among members of communities (Pezeshki *et al.*, 2019). This has also been linked to poor waste management which has implications for human health. Research has shown that improper waste management hinders sustainable development in most urban and rural communities. The consequences of poor sanitation make it imperative to embark on ways of increasing environmental awareness and public hygiene.

Growth of population and urbanization without effective health policies has been responsible for rising cases of poor health in developing countries. In Nigeria for instance, losses to poor sanitation are estimated to be around 455 billion Naira as about 70 million Nigerians are affected by poor sanitary conditions (Akpunonu & Egenuka, 2021). In developed countries, poor health is traceable to sedentary lifestyles. The cost of medical treatment can be drastically reduced if health promotion is effective, especially where people imbibe good health culture. Rising public medical expenses have become a burden to the government in many countries, and efforts to stem health cost can only be by health promotion with open objectives and a clear-cut policy.

Complications arise from poor maintenance of environmental and body hygiene. Research has documented that residing in a polluted environment, consuming improper food, impure water and inhaling fume accumulate poisonous toxics in the human body system. If this continues overtime, foreign bodies are known to build up in the blood stream, resulting in eventual organ damage, or other forms of sickness (Klompas *et al.*, 2020). Consumption of contaminated food and polluted water is a risk to people's health which suggests the adoption of education and health policies as preventive measures. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), World Health Organization (WHO) and National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) have taken initiatives to promote health across the world. In furtherance, medical experts have established that water contaminated with chemicals evidently results in health challenges which include renal and respiratory problems among others (Godwin, 2020). The plausible precautionary measure is to make provision for portable water and adhere strictly to a regime of personal hygiene.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Concern for health across the world is age-long issue, particularly with the emergence of new diseases in many parts of the world. Major health scourges have been found to emerge from Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), malaria and cancer among others. These scourges have taken a toll on the world's population. The burden is, however, greater in developing countries where the health system is weak, relying on assistance from advanced nations. Each of these epidemics has root causes which proper adherence to preventive health principles can avert. Poor health management and rising rate of deaths deplete national productivity, thus reducing the gross domestic product (GDP) of poor nations where the state of health is deplorable.

The need arises for the formulation of new health policies and review of environmental health laws. A strong recommendation is to demand investment in health and medical research in tropical areas of the world where health challenges appear more devastating. Health advocacy groups exist in advanced countries. These groups aim at influencing government policies to improve living conditions. Governments can collaborate with them to spread knowledge of good health practices to rural communities. Improvement in people's health and living standards can be achieved when more collaborative efforts are shared among ministries of health across countries to address emerging health issues and challenges. Plans and health actions by statutory health agencies and allied groups can reduce the cost implication of health challenges among the populace.

Above all, a regime of cleanliness, regular intake of clean water, quarterly medical check-up, early diagnosis and treatment of health cases can be promoted through community education and exposure to health policies in the various languages. Emergence and rise in the cases of chronic non-communicable diseases in urban and rural areas of the world now necessitate the need for strong health promotion. The case of the recent COVID-19 is a strong signal to the need for health promotion around the world (Woodall, 2020). From the cases reviewed, it is evident that, for both corporate organizations and individuals, good health holds the key to performance and productivity. Consequently, health promotion efforts need to be geared up.

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