Introduction to Primary Health Care

William R. Brieger, MPH, CHES, DrPh
Johns Hopkins University
Section A

What Is Primary Health Care?
PHC Is Essential Health Care

- Practical, scientifically sound, and socially acceptable methods and technology
- Made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community
PHC Is Essential Health Care

- Through their full participation
- At a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development
- In the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination
Primary Health Care

- Forms an integral part of the country’s health system
- Is the central function and main focus
- Is also integral to the overall social and economic development of the community
Primary Health Care

- Is the first level of contact for individuals, the family, and the community with the national health system
- Is a continuing health care process
- Brings health care as close as possible to where people live and work
Primary Health Care

*In a Social Context*

- Reflects and evolves from the economic conditions and socio-cultural and political characteristics of the country and its communities
- Is based on the application of the relevant results of social, biomedical and health services research, and public health experience
Primary Health Care

*In a Social Context*

- Addresses the main health problems in the community, providing promotive, preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services accordingly
Essential Components/Services that Comprise PHC

- At the time of Alma Ata, eight services were defined
- Since then more have been added by
  - International agencies
  - Individual countries
Eight Essential Components
of PHC Services

1. Education concerning prevailing health problems and methods of preventing and controlling them (planned learning activities, voluntary behavior change, full participation)

Source: Save the Children

Continued
2. Promotion of food supply and proper nutrition
3. Maternal and child health care, including family planning
4. Immunization against the major infectious diseases

Polio may soon be eradicated through worldwide immunization campaigns
5. Prevention and control of locally endemic diseases such as Guinea Worm and malaria

Source: The Carter Center
6. Supply of adequate water and sanitation: Drink water from a sanitary well (left)—not a guinea-worm infested pond (right)  

Note: Man on right is using a filtering pipe to drink out of pond.
7. Appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries at a local government health center; from a village health worker
8. Provision of essential drugs: essential drug lists, Bamako Initiatives—revolving funds; collaboration with indigenous healers; training patent medicine vendors
PHC Involves

- All related sectors and aspects of national and community development
- Maximum community self-reliance and participation in the planning, organization, operation, and control of care
- Making fullest use of local, national, and other available resources
- Developing (through appropriate education) the ability of communities to participate
PHC Relies on

- Integrated, functional, and mutually supportive referral systems
- Health workers, including physicians, nurses, midwives, auxiliaries, community workers, and traditional practitioners
- A response to the expressed needs of the community
- The spirit of partnership and service
PHC Aims to Achieve

- An acceptable level of health for all the people of the world
- A fuller and better use of world’s resources, through a genuine policy of independence, peace, détente, and disarmament
- An acceleration of social and economic development, of which PHC is an essential part
Section B

Social Sciences
Social Sciences

- Sociology is the general science of society and is concerned with relationships
  - The family
  - Social groups
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Social networks
Unity Star Club
Social Sciences

- **Economics** studies how individuals and societies use productive resources available to them.

Cost may be one reason why these maternity beds are empty.
Social Sciences

**Anthropology** is the study of the culture and way of life of various societies.

The crocodile, symbol of the river goddess Yemoja, helps prevent smallpox brought on by the wrath of the Supreme Being, Olodumare, represented by Soponna.
Social Sciences

- *Political science* looks at the use of power, the machinery of government, the formulation and implementation of policy, and the decision-making process
  - May start with airing views at a village meeting
  - Challenge in public health of greeting grassroots views heard by policy makers
Village meeting
Social Sciences

- **Geography** concerns the distribution of human activities in space
  - Onchocerciasis if live near river
  - Delay in care if live far from facility
  - Poor road network, higher cost of products
Map of Ido
Implications of the Social Sciences

*For the Contents of Alma Ata*

- Sociological
- Geographical
- Political
- Economical
- Cultural/Anthropological
Sociological Implications

- Permit them to lead a socially productive life
- Evolves from the socio-cultural characteristics of the country
- Involves all related sectors and aspects of national and community development
- Contact of individuals, the family, and the community with the national health system
Geographical Implications

- Made universally accessible
- Bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work
- Local and referral levels
Political Implications

- Existing gross inequality is unacceptable
- Through their full participation
- In the spirit of social justice
- Governments have a responsibility for the health of their people
- In the spirit of self-determination
- Giving priority to those in most need
- All governments should formulate national policies
Economic Implications

- Permit them to lead an economically productive life
- Spirit of self-reliance
- At a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain
- Reflects the economic conditions
- Making fullest use of local, national, and other available resources
Cultural Implications

- Socially acceptable methods and technology, as well as traditional practitioners
- Expressed needs of the community
Section C

Approaches to PHC
Two Approaches to PHC

Comprehensive PHC According to Alma Ata

- Second order change
  - A new way of doing things
- Community development
- Full participation
- Community diagnosis
- Change in relationships/partnership
- Organizational change
Rethinking PHC

Selective Primary Care

- First order change
  - Substitution of one way for another
- Target diseases
- Specific technologies
- Focused ethnographic assessment
- Individual behavior change
- Organizational enhancement
Comprehensive PHC
*Focuses on Processes*

- Health development: Local leadership and capabilities
- How interventions might be accepted in context of local cultural practices, organizational strengths, and appropriate technologies
Selective PHC

*Focuses on Programs and Products*

- For example, oral rehydration, immunization, and bed nets
- Identifying and transferring specific, effective, and economical technologies designed to reduce disease morbidity and mortality
Different Approaches to PHC

- Imply different understandings of the role of human behavior in health
  - Selective PHC
    - Behavior as an item to be targeted with messages and manipulated for health effects
Different Approaches to PHC

- Comprehensive PHC
  - Behavior as an integrated part of personality and culture
  - The person and community have the right to change or not
  - Behavior change arises through dialogue and mutual understanding