

## **Global Health Partnerships: Necessity, Challenges, and Systems**

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Global refers to the geographic reach across many separated sovereign state boundaries (Cooper & Kirton, 2009). According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2006), health consists of all physical and mental things that directly constitute and improve the longevity and quality of human life. Governance is the creating, shaping, strengthening, and using of transnational institutions norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that influence how autonomous actors behave (Cooper & Kirton, 2009). The purpose of this paper is to briefly discuss why it is necessary for global health partnerships, and to discuss some of the challenges to global health governance. The multisystem model (biopsychosocial-spiritual model) and the systems theory will also be discussed. The paper will be concluded with implications for social work practice.

### **The Necessity of Global Health Partnerships**

Global health is a worldwide effort to address health issues worldwide in order to sustain life. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many nations in the world only responded to the health problems that affected their people. After the epidemic of HIV/AIDS to other countries outside of the United States, there began an onset of realization of the effects of this life threatening issue and disease. Global health today deals with collective efforts across all borders to better understand health problems and to promote healthy lifestyles. This was also a way to create positive relationships for future trade which is known as creating a partnership.

Some health challenges such as HIV/AIDS can have a large global, political, and economic impact. Good health can build a stable economy so people can have better jobs without high limitations due to health, which affects productivity. As stated by Kaiser Family Foundation (2010), poor health hinders countries' development and trade which reinforces the cycle of poverty and political instability.

Due to the increase in travel and communication, research is needed like never before to stop the spread of disease and bacteria. As the world advances, so does disease. Treatment and research calls for professional expertise and money. Global health partnerships are relevant for these reasons. Global health partnerships allow nations to share in their expertise and research as well as their health facilities and medical schools. Global health partnerships are needed to acquire global action on worldwide efforts to address health issues worldwide.

At the end of World War II, the World Health Organization (WHO) was created to produce health for all and assist the new states with creating policies that would help provide their citizens with better health (Harman, 2012). WHO successfully led campaigns to eradicate certain diseases which showed that countries can set aside their differences for the sake of global health. This is just an example of global health partnerships; meaning the exchanging of information and resources to help save lives, increase life expectancy, and improve the quality of health and life.

### **Challenges to Global Health Governance**

There are many challenges to global health governance but only a few will be mentioned. One of the challenges of why it will be hard for all countries to come together is their resistance to give up sovereignty (independence). Many countries and states have worked hard to have their own therefore, they want to keep it. This also has to do with countries and states feelings of safety and security for their own as well as the fear of counter terrorism. Another challenge is that some countries and states will not want to work together if there is no economic gain. Most countries and states do for others because of profit motives. This challenge will also affect the health of poor countries because trained and licensed healthcare professionals from poor countries will go to better jobs and opportunities in other countries.

A third challenge is the marketing of behavior choices associated with health effects. Advertisement for drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and the eating of fast food will not go away. As a result, conditions and chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and various cancers, and diseases associated with exposure to environmental pollutants will continue to rise.

### **Conceptual Framework for Social Work Practice**

We are all too familiar with the biopsychosocial-spiritual model of human behavior in social work as it is an interdependent model that deals with systems. The concept of this model being interdependent rely on the fact that in order to understand one dimension, you must take into account all of the other dimensions inclusive of this model: biological, psychological, social, and spiritual. As we focus on global health and global health partnerships, we cannot just focus on the biological aspect. The biology of a person is an integral part of human behavior that coincides with the interactions of the other dimensions. When we focus on health, we must focus on all aspects of it: biological health, psychological health, social health, and spiritual health. As all aspects of health has a great influence on society and the environment in which we live.

The systems perspective sees human behavior as the outcome of interactions of persons operating within linked social systems. The systems theory helps us to understand that the aspects or dimensions that make up a person are not the only those things that are factored when confronting global health challenges. The environmental conditions and the multiple systems that we are part of also influence the susceptibility of diseases. As previously mentioned, health can affect the environment on a global, political, and economic standpoint. These aspects may not only affect resource availability but the interpretation and response to environmental conditions on the part of different populations and different population subgroups (Depoy & Gilson, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

The wealth of a country or state is assessed by the health of the economy as well as the health of the population. Global health focuses on when a physical health challenge affects a large population. When we have these challenges there is a need for a global response (intervention) which leads to global partnerships which causes a need for governance. Innovations can start new processes of public governance that prevents physical health challenges before they start (Harrison, 2006). Global health governance matters because it is pertinent to successfully end poverty, increase international development, and bring peace and security. Most importantly, global health governance becomes a matter to protect human lives and the global ecosystem on which all life depends on. Goal eight of the Millennium Development Goals is to develop a global partnership for development which speaks on the importance of these partnerships (UN MDG Report, 2012). Simply put, without us all working together and building positive relationships, disease will continue to rise, economy will continue to decrease, and death tolls will reach an all-time high.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

Policy decisions to address specific problems must also be made within the broader macro context because policies designed to bring about change in one health care sector can have wider repercussions, both desirable and undesirable, in other sectors of the system. Policy decisions and their implementation are often critical to the future direction of the health care delivery system. An understanding of the health care system has specific implications for health services managers, who must understand the macro environment in which they make critical decisions in planning and strategic management (Shi & Singh, 2012).

In assessment and interventions, social workers must recognize that interior environmental conditions (what goes in the body) of health and disease are influenced by the exterior environmental social, political, cultural, and economic situations or contexts. It must be considered that one person's interior environment health status is affecting other people in one's exterior environment (Hutchison, 2008). Social workers must take on the roles of not only prevention specialist, but also researcher, and policy advocate. Social workers being included in global health partnerships are an excellent way to take on all three of these roles.

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