**Promotion of Health**

Promotion of health is recognized as one of the most important components of public health and community health practice

Health promotion includes all efforts that seek to move people closer to optimal wellbeing or higher levels of wellness. Nursing, in particular, has a social mandate for engaging in health promotion.

Health promotion programs and activities include many forms of:

1. health education—for example, teaching the dangers of drug use,
2. Demonstrating healthful practices such as regular exercise,
3. Providing more health-promoting options such as heart-healthy menu selections. Community health promotion, then, encompasses the development and management of preventive health care services that are responsive to community health needs. Wellness programs in schools and industry are examples.

Demonstration of such healthful practices as eating nutritious foods and exercising more regularly often is performed and promoted by individual health workers. In addition, groups and health agencies that support a smoke-free environment, encourage physical fitness programs for all ages, or demand that food products be properly labeled underscore the importance of these practices and create public awareness.

The goal of health promotion is to raise levels of wellness for individuals, families, populations, and communities.

Community health efforts accomplish this goal through a three-pronged effort to

1. Increase the span of healthy life for all citizens

2. Reduce health disparities among population group

3. Achieve access to preventive services for everyone

**The concept of health**

Health, in the abstract, refers to a person’s physical, mental, and spiritual state; it can be positive (as being in good health) or negative (as being in poor health). Optimal health is defined as “a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health positively as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” .

**Health,** refers to a holistic state of wellbeing, which includes soundness of mind, body, and spirit. Community health practitioners place a strong emphasis on.

**Wellness**, which includes this definition of health, but also incorporates the capacity to develop a person’s potential to lead a fulfilling and productive life—one that can be measured in terms of *quality of life*. Today, our health is greatly affected by the lifestyles we lead and the risk behaviors in which we engage. An individual’s behavioral risk factors, such as smoking, physical inactivity, or substance

abuse, can be assessed through the use of various interview techniques and questionnaires or surveys.

There is an increasing awareness of the strong relationship of health to environment. This is not a new concept. Almost 150 years ago, Florence Nightingale explored the health and illness connection with the environment. She believed that a person’s health was greatly influenced by ventilation, noise, light, cleanliness, diet, and a restful bed . She laid down simple rules about maintaining and obtaining “health,” which were written for laywomen caring for family members to “put the constitution in such a state as that it will have no disease”

The “built environment” is a concept under study by public health and other professionals, as it is well documented that the man-made structures and surroundings in a community (e.g., highways and bike paths, parks and open spaces, public buildings, and housing developments) have an impact on the health of individuals and populations In some cultures, health is viewed differently. Some see it as the freedom from and absence of evil. Illness may be seen as punishment for being bad or doing evil. Many individuals come from families in which beliefs regarding health and illness are heavily influenced by religion, superstition, folk beliefs, or “old wives’ tales.” This is not unusual, and encountering such beliefs when working with various groups in the community is common.

Prerequisites for health were outlined in the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 2010b) as “peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable eco-system, sustainable resources, social justice, and equity.

Although health is widely accepted as desirable, the nature of health is often ambiguous. Consumers and providers often define health and wellness in different ways. To clarify the concept for nurses who are considering community health practice.

Health involves the total person or community. All of the dimensions of life affecting everyday functioning determine an individual’s or a community’s health, including physical, psychological, spiritual, economic, and sociocultural experiences. All of these factors must be considered when dealing with the health of an individual or community.

The approach should be holistic. A client’s placement on the health continuum can be known only if the nurse considers all facets of the client’s life, including not only physical and emotional status, but also the status of home, family, and work.

**Subjective and Objective** **Dimensions of Health**

Health involves both *subjective* and *objective* dimensions; that is,

(subjective): it involves how people feel. a healthy person, is one who feels well and who experiences the sensation of a vital, positive state. Healthy people are full of life and vigor, capable of physical and mental productivity. They feel minimal discomfort and displeasure with the world around them. Again, people experience varying degrees of vitality and wellbeing.

(objective): how well they can function in their Environment. A healthy individual or community carries out necessary activities and achieves enriching goals. Unhealthy people not only feel ill, but they are limited, to some degree, in their ability to carry out daily activities. Indeed, levels of illness or wellness are measured largely in terms of ability to function.

The ability to function can be observed. A man dresses and feeds himself and goes to work. Despite financial exigencies, a family nourishes its members through a supportive emotional climate. A community provides adequate resources and services for its members.

These performances, to some degree, can be regarded as indicators of health status. The actions of an individual, family, or community are motivated by their values. Some activities such as walking and taking care of personal needs, are functions valued by most people. Other actions, such as bird watching, volunteering to help a charity, or running, have more limited appeal.

Healthy people of the decade:

Healthy People 2010 and Healthy People 2020emphasize that the health of an individual is linkedto the health of the larger community, and that thislarger community’s health is related to the health ofthe corresponding nation.

Community characteristics of health have beendescribed by the Centers for Disease Control as health relatedquality of life indicators. Early descriptionsincluded such things as rates of poverty and unemployment,levels of high school education and severe workdisability, mortality rates, and the proportion of adolescentbirths even what most peoplewould consider lifestyle choices (e.g., dietary patternsleading to obesity, reduced levels of physical activity,smoking, alcohol consumption) have been shownto be strongly influenced by environmental factors.

Canada has examined such factors as life stress, body mass index (BMI) and dietary practices, smoking and alcohol use, unemployment rate, leisure-time physical activity, number of health professionals, as well as the total health expenditures in their list of health indicators.

All programs serve to provide resources and support for local communities to address the preventable risk factors related to chronic disease, such as poor diet, tobacco use, excessive use of alcohol, and physical inactivity.

A healthy community is defined as one that “continuously creates and improves both its physical and social environments, helping people to support one another in aspects of daily life and to develop to their fullest potential.

A *competent community*, is one in which the various organizations, groups, and aggregates of people making up the community do at

least four things:

1. They collaborate effectively in identifying the problems and needs of the community.

2. They achieve a working consensus on goals and priorities.

3. They agree on ways and means to implement the agreed-on goals.

4. They collaborate effectively in the required actions.

Healthy communities and healthy cities impact the health of their populations and vice versa.

The WHO initiated the *Healthy Cities* movement to improve the health status of urban populations. A healthy city is defined as “one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all functions of life and in developing their maximum potential”. The 10

key components of a healthy city are

1. A clean, safe physical environment of a high quality (including housing quality)
2. An ecosystem that is stable now and sustainable in the long term
3. A strong mutually supportive and non- exploitative community
4. A high degree of participation in and control by the citizens over the decisions affecting their lives, health, and wellbeing
5. The meeting of basic needs (food, water, shelter, income, safety, and work) for all the city’s people
6. Access by the people to a wide variety of experiences and resources, with the chance for a wide variety of contact, interaction, and communication
7. A diverse, vital, and innovative economy
8. The encouragement of connectedness with the past, with the cultural and biologic heritage of city dwellers, and with other groups and

individuals

1. A form that is compatible with and enhances the preceding characteristics
2. An optimum level of appropriate public health and sickness care services, accessible to all, and high health status (high levels of positive health and low levels of disease)