Essential Public Health Services: What They Are and What They Do

Barney Turnock MD, MPH
UIC School of Public Health

Questions of the Day

- What are these things called the “essential public health services”?
- Where did they come from?
- What are they good for?
- Why are they important?
- How do they relate to public health practice?
- How can anyone answer these questions without putting the audience to sleep?

Genesis of the Essential Public Health Services

- In the Beginning, was the IOM Report on The Future of Public Health (1988)
  ...the IOM Report begot the Core Functions
  ...the Core Functions begot several formulations characterizing Public Health Practice
  ...the various Public Health Practice formulations and new “core functions” for health reform begot confusion
  ...the Confusion begot the Essential Public Health Services

Public Health in “Disarray”

- “In recent years there has been a growing sense that public health as a profession, as a governmental activity, and as a commitment of society is neither clearly defined, adequately supported, nor fully understood.”
- “...current capabilities for effective public health action are inadequate.”
- “By its very nature, public health requires support by the public, its beneficiaries.”

- The Future of Public Health, IOM, 1988
IOM’s Future of Public Health

- Public Health Mission
  - “...assuring conditions in which people can be healthy.”

- Substance of Public Health
  - “…organized community efforts aimed at the prevention of disease and the promotion of health.”

Governmental Role

- “The governmental public health agency has a vital function: to see to it that vital elements are in place and the mission is being adequately addressed.”

Core Functions of Public Health

- Assessment
- Policy Development
- Assurance

Public Health Core Functions

- Assessment: Surveillance of disease/injury
  - monitoring trends; analyzing causes; and identifying needs

- Policy Development
  - broad community involvement; promote scientific basis of decision-making; strategic approach; development of comprehensive public health policies

Broad Understanding of Health

- Substance of Public Health
  - “organized community efforts aimed at the prevention of disease and the promotion of health.”
Public Health Core Functions

- Assurance
  - seeing to the implementation of legislative mandates as well as fulfilling statutory responsibilities
  - encourage, require and provide necessary services
  - guarantee high priority personal and community-wide health services, including subsidization for those unable to afford them

An Important Barrier to Effective Public Health Action

- Inadequate capacity to carry out the essential public health functions of assessment, policy development, and assurance of services

What Public Health Does

- Prevent epidemics and spread of disease
- Protect against environmental hazards
- Prevent injuries
- Promote and encourage healthy behaviors
- Respond to disasters and assist communities in recovery
- Assure the quality and accessibility of health services
Essential Public Health Services

1. Monitor health status and identify community health problems
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community
3. Inform, educate and empower people about health issues
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
7. Link people with needed personal health services and ensure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
8. Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

Where Are EPHS Found?
- EPHS identifiable within programs
- EPHS also operate at organization, community, system levels
- Intervals between the notes...

View 1: Infrastructure and Essential Public Health Services

- Linked to the core functions
- Cyclical and continuous processes
- Managed at the systems level
- Enhanced through active research
Monitor Health Status
- Ongoing community health status assessment
- Identification of threats to health
- Determination of health service needs
- Attention to special high risk populations
- Identification of community assets & resources
- Interpretation & communication
- Manage multisectoral information systems

Diagnose and Investigate
- Access to public health lab capabilities
- Active infectious disease epidemiology programs
- Technical capacity for epidemiologic investigations and health event patterns
Inform, Educate, Empower
- Community development
- Social marketing and targeted communication
- Provide accessible health information
- Collaborate with health care providers on health messages and programs
- Joint health education efforts with schools, churches, work sites, etc.

Mobilizing Partnerships
- Convening and facilitating partnerships
- Undertaking defined health improvement planning efforts and projects
- Building coalitions to draw upon the full range of potential human and material resources to improve community health

Develop Policies and Plans
- Leadership development at all levels
- Systematic community-wide planning for health improvement
- Develop & track measurable objectives
- Joint evaluation with medical care system
- Development of policy and legislation to guide the practice of public health

Enforcing Laws & Regulations
- Enforcement of sanitary codes
- Protection of drinking water supplies
- Enforcement of clean air standards
- Animal control
- Follow-up of hazard investigations
- Monitor quality of medical care
- Review of new drugs, biologics & devices
**Link to & Assure Care**

- Assurance of effective entry
- Culturally appropriate materials and staff
- Ongoing care management
- Transportation services
- Targeted outreach & education for special populations

**Assure Competent Workforce**

- Education, training, assessment of personnel
- Efficient processes for licensure
- Adoption of lifelong learning programs
- Active partnerships with professional training programs
- Continuing education to management and leadership development

**Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility and Quality**

- Assessing program effectiveness
- Providing information necessary for allocating resources and reshaping programs

**Research and Innovation**

- Participate in and support full continuum of innovation
- Continuous linkage with institutions of higher learning
- Internal capacity to mount timely epidemiologic & economic analyses and conduct health services research
Tools Based on and/or Linked with EPHS Framework

- Healthy People 2010 National Health Objectives, Infrastructure Chapter
- National Public Health Performance Standards Program (Local, State, Governance, International)
- Local Public Health System Assessment component of MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships)
- State-based Performance Standards for LHDs
- Core Public Health Competencies (via Council on Linkages)
- Public Health Expenditure Studies (PHF)
- Frist-Kennedy Capacity Building Initiatives

Basis for Public Health Practice

EPHS...
- Linked to the core functions
- Cyclical and continuous processes
- Managed at the systems level
- Enhanced through active research
- Organizing framework for individual and collective practice