

## Primary Health Care

### Basic Definitions:

#### 1. Health:

*The World Health Organization (WHO)* defined health as **a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.**

Today health is not merely an absence of disease; it is related to quality of life instead. Health is considered a means of productivity. Thus health development is essential to socio-economic development as a whole.

*Another definition* of health is that “ **health is a successful adaptation of the human body to stresses and stimuli (in the environment) to which it is exposed, such that it expresses adequate functioning under given genetic and environmental conditions.** The successful adaptation may be very optimal, and the attributes of optimal health are:

1. Anatomical integrity to ensure the physical aspect of health.
2. Ability to do normal duties at personal, family and community level.
3. Ability to deal with stress whether this stress is physical, mental or social.
4. Feeling of well being. This is the mental or psychological dimension of health.
5. Freedom from disease and premature death.
6. Spiritual and moral stability.

#### **Health has many dimensions:**

1. Physical dimension.
2. Mental dimension
3. Social dimension.
4. Spiritual (including religion) and ethical dimension.
5. Emotional dimension.
6. Vocational dimension
7. Other dimensions, philosophical, socioeconomic, medical, environmental

Thus, health may be seen as extending over a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum is the optimal health and at the other end is the end of any health or death.

**Optimal health**—————**Death**

2. **Disease (Dis-ease):** Failure of the adaptive mechanism of an organism to counteract the stimuli and stresses to which it is exposed, resulting in abnormal structure and function of one or more parts of the body.
3. **Health care services:** All services performed by individuals or institutions for promoting, maintaining or restoring health.
4. **Health care:** the product of health care services delivered through various types of health services. It implies a comprehensive care (promotive, protective, curative and rehabilitative).
5. **Medical care:** A term used to emphasize the delivery of curative care. It is a subset of health care.

#### **Levels of Care:**

- 1-Primary health care
- 2-Secondary health care
- 3-Tertiary health care

#### **Primary health care**

- The “first” level of contact between the individual and the health system.
- Essential health care (PHC) is provided.
- A majority of prevailing health problems can be satisfactorily managed.
- The closest to the people.
- Provided by the primary health centers.

#### **Secondary health care**

- More complex problems are dealt with.
- Comprises curative services
- Provided by the district hospitals
- The 1st referral level

#### **Tertiary health care:**

- Offers super-specialist care
- Provided by regional/central level institution.
- Provide training programs

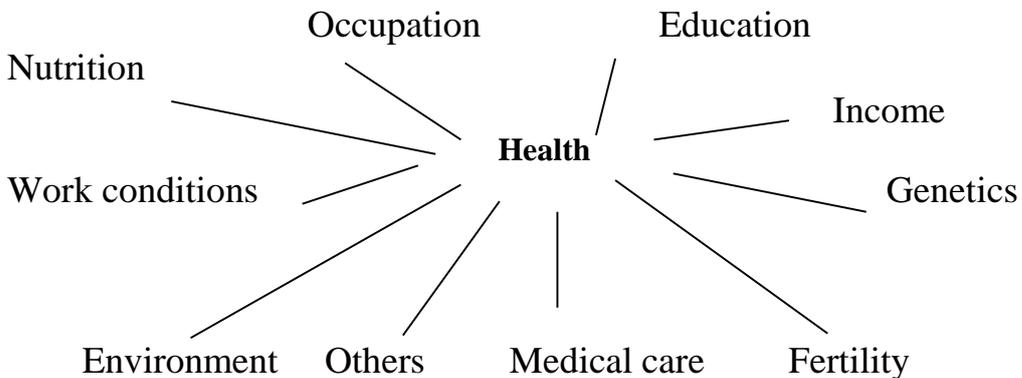
#### **Differences between medical and health care:**

	Medical care	Health care
The concept	old	New
The prevalence	In developing countries	In developed countries
The consumers	Sick individuals	All individuals ( healthy & sick)
The aspects	Diagnostic & curative	Comprehensive (Preventive, curative, rehabilitative & promotive)
The concern with determinants of diseases	absent	Present

**Characteristics of medical care (hospital-based, curative –oriented care):**

1. Usually it is based on high technology or sophisticated technology which is costly to do and costly to maintain.
2. It is limited to people who visited hospitals usually complaining of advanced disease.
3. It does not interfere in any means in the process of disease genesis outside the walls of hospitals
4. Although hospital care relieves pain in most cases, it does not always cure disease. Sometimes it adds disease to the those admitted (nosocomial infection, iatrogenic diseases, provider mistakes)
5. The coverage by hospital care is usually limited to much-selected catchment's population.

**Adding to that, factors determining health are many; some of these factors are illustrated below:**



Medical care (curative care) is only one factor affecting the health status of people and perhaps, it is not the most important determinant of health of neither individuals nor population groups.

It is clear that the classical hospital – based cure oriented medical care is not the solution for the ever increasing health needs of the general population. A new approach was proposed and then practiced. That was the **primary health care (PHC)**. The PHC strategy was adopted by the WHO and member states in 1978.

### **Definition of primary health care (PHC):**

Primary health care is **essential** health care made universally **accessible** to individuals and families in the community by means **acceptable** to them, through their full participation and at an **affordable** cost. It forms an **integral** part both of the country's health care system of which PHC is the nucleus and of the overall social and economic development of the community.

Primary health care stresses the provision of **promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care**. In other words, it stresses the provision of comprehensive, continuing, practical and high quality care. It is not a second hand care and in no way it is intended to make the cost of care a burden on consumers.

### **Primary Health Care is based on following principles:**

- 1-accessibility and equity;
- 2- relevance to the needs of the population;
- 3-cost effective appropriate use of technology and health services;
- 4-integration between primary care and secondary and tertiary care;
- 5 -encouragement of self care and community involvement in health service planning and provision;
- 6-collaboration between health and other sectors to address underlying causes of ill health;
- 7-redistribution of resources to primary care, areas of need, to rural areas, and to disadvantaged groups.

Health For All means:

*ATTAINMENT OF A LEVEL OF HEALTH THAT WILL ENABLE EVERY INDIVIDUAL LEAD A SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE LIFE*