

## Health Education: Present Landscape And Future Vistas



### Education

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**Dr. Sanjeev Sharma**

Deptt. Of Preventive and Community Medicine, BPS Medical College, Khanpur Kalan,

**Dr. Savita Sharma**

Assistant Professor, Gaur Brahman College of Education, Rohtak

### ABSTRACT

*Health education is indispensable in achieving individual and community health. It can help to increase knowledge and to reinforce desired behaviour patterns. It is a process that informs, motivates and helps people to adopt and maintain healthy practices and lifestyle, advocates environmental changes as needed to facilitate this goal and conduct a professional training and research to the same end. The health education extends beyond the conventional health sector. It covers every aspect of family and community health. While no definite training curricula can be proposed, the content of health education may be divided into divisions for the sake of simplicity. Since health education has a limited impact when directed from general education, most of the needed information must be integrated into educational system by ways of books, class room materials etc. and must have the young population as the principal target. Health education cannot be given to one person by another. It involves, the teaching, learning and inculcation of habits concerned with the objective of healthful living. This review captures how the health education efforts in the country have been aided by concerted actions within the discipline and by an enabling environment and a positive intent at the national level, whereby we can better understand the context for the recent developments in Indian health Education.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Health education is a social science that draws from the biological, environmental, psychological, physical and medical sciences to promote health and prevent disease, disability and premature death through education-driven voluntary behaviour change activities. Health education is the development of individual, group, institutional, community and systemic strategies to improve health knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour. The purpose of health education is to positively influence the health behaviour of individuals and communities as well as the living and working conditions that influence their health.

Health education is the translation of what is known about health, into desirable individual and community behaviour patterns by means of an educational process. It is a combination of learning opportunities and teaching activities designed to facilitate voluntary adaptations of behaviour that are conducive to health.

The declaration of Alma-Ata (1978) by emphasizing the need for 'individual and community participation' gave a new meaning and direction to the practice of health education. The dynamic definition of health education is as follows:

"A process aimed at encouraging people to want to be healthy, to know how to stay healthy, to do what they can individually and collectively to maintain health, and to seek help when needed".

Following the Alma-Ata Declaration adopted in 1978, the emphasis has shifted from :

Prevention of disease to promotion of healthy lifestyles;

The modification of individual behaviour to modification of "social environment" in which the individual lives;

Community participation to community involvement; and Promotion of individual and community "self-reliance".

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES :

The aims and objectives of health education may be stated as below:

- To encourage people to adopt and sustain health promoting lifestyle and practices;
- To promote the proper use of health services available to them;
- To arouse interest, provide knowledge, improve skills and change attitude in taking rational decisions to solve their

own problems; and

- To stimulate individual and community self-reliance.

The focus of health education is on people and on action. Its goal is to make realistic improvements in the basic quality of life. Many health education programmes hope, in some way, to influence behaviour or attitudes. The implication of these new concepts is that health education is an integral part of the national goals. The fact remains that effective health education has the potential for saving many more lives than has any one research discovery in the foreseeable future.

### PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH EDUCATION:

Health education cannot be given to one person by another. It involves, among other things, the teaching, learning and inculcation of habits concerned with the objective of healthful living. Every individual learns and through learning develops the modes of behaviour by which he lives. Learning and teaching is a two way process of transactions in human relations, between the teacher and the taught. The teacher cannot teach unless the pupil wants to learn. Learning takes place not only in the classroom, but also outside in the wider world. There is internal learning by which a man grows into an adult individual. It is possible to abstract certain principles of learning and use them in health education. These include :

**Credibility:** good health education is based on facts-that means it must be consistent and compatible with scientific knowledge and also with the local culture, educational system and social goals.

**Interest:** it is a psychological principle that people are unlikely to listen to those things which are not to their interest. Health educators must find out the real health needs of the people. They are called as felt needs that is needs the people feel about themselves.

**Participation:** it is a keyword in health education and is based on psychological principle of active learning. A high degree of participation tends to create a sense of involvement, personal acceptance and decision making. It provides maximum feedback. The people have a right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their healthcare. If community participation is not an integral part, health programs and unlikely to succeed.

**Motivation:** In health education motivation is an important factor. The need for incentives is the first step in learning to change. The incentive may be positive or negative. Motivation

is made to change the behaviour. Motivation is contagious: one motivated person may spread motivation throughout a group.

**Reinforcement:** Few people can learn all that is new in a single period. Repetition at intervals is necessary. If there is no reinforcement, there is every possibility of the individual going back to the pre awareness stage.

**Learning by doing:** Learning is an action-process; not a “memorizing” one in the narrow sense. The Chinese proverb:”if I hear I forget; if I see I remember; and if I do I know”, Illustrates the importance of learning by doing.

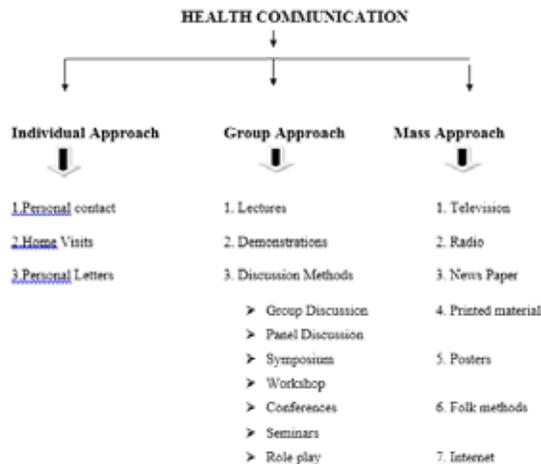
**Good Human Relations:** Sharing of information, ideas and feeling happen most easily between people who have a good relationship. Building good relationship with people goes hand in hand with developing communication skills.

**PRACTICE IN HEALTH EDUCATION:**

Educational material should be designed to focus attention to provide new knowledge, to facilitate interpersonal and group discussion and to reinforce or clarify prior knowledge and behaviour.

**Audio- Visual Aids:** No health education can be effective without audiovisual aids. They help to simplify unfamiliar concepts; bring about understanding where words fail; reinforce learning by appealing to more than one sense, and provide a dynamic way of avoiding monotony. Modern Science has made available an endless array of audiovisual aids .

**Methods in Health Communication:** The methods in Health Communication may be grouped as:



**A rundown of assets of Mass Media and Personal Communication**

Mass Media (TV, Radio, Newspaper)	Personal Communication (Interpersonal and group methods)
Reaches the widest population	Capitalizes on warmth and understanding and knowledge of communication.
Gets public attention.	Provides an opportunity for involvement for asking questions, expressing fears, and learning more

Gives greater support for concentrated programmes such as those for a week or month	Can get people to make changes in personal habits more readily, when discussion presents reasonable explanations for these changes.
More effective among those with above average educational level.	More influential with average and below average educational level.

**PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT:**

Health education cannot be planned in a vacuum. It is planned in connection with a specific health programme or health service. Therefore, the specifics of a health education strategy in a local community have to be formulated in accordance with its socio- cultural, psycho-social, political, economic and situational characteristics. The planners should be fully conversant with the health education needs of the particular programme for which health education is to be planned.

**Health education planning follows the main steps in scientific planning, which are:**

1. Collecting information on specific problems as seen by the community.
2. Identification of the problem
3. Deciding on priorities
4. Setting goals and measurable objectives
5. Assessment of resources
6. Consideration of possible solutions
7. Preparation of plan of action
8. Implementation of plan
9. Monitoring and evaluating the degree to which stated objectives have been achieved
10. Reassessment of the process of planning. Planning and evaluation are essential for effective health education.

All health education work requires continuous evaluation to measure the effectiveness of health education activities in achieving stated objectives and to assess the importance on programme performance of such variable as knowledge, attitude, behavior change and consumer satisfaction.

**CONCLUSION:**

Health education is a complex activity in which different individuals and organizations play a part. Among them are parents, teachers, friends, physicians, health workers and various organizations, governmental and non- governmental. No country in the world, least of all a country with a large population and small resources such as India, can afford to employ institutionally trained health workers. Therefore, health education should be the concern of everybody engaged in any form of community welfare work.

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