

Nurses as Catalysts for Holistic Public Health Policies: Pioneering a Futuristic Paradigm in India

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Abstract

In recent years, achieving "health in all policies" has gained significant attention and it emphasizes the integration of health considerations into all policy-making processes to ensure that health outcomes are prioritized across various sectors. Nurses' potential as public health advisors can be realized through strengthening education, fostering teamwork, promoting prevention, and increasing their role, resulting in a healthier and more equitable India.

Keywords: Health in all; Public health; Equitable services; Health integration

Introduction

The healthcare landscape in India is marked by a complex web of social determinants, ranging from poverty and inadequate sanitation to limited access to quality healthcare services. In such a context, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the confines of traditional healthcare settings and addresses the underlying factors that influence health outcomes. Nurses, with their diverse skill sets and proximity to communities, are well-positioned to bridge the gap between healthcare systems and public health policy [1,2].

First and foremost, nurses bring a wealth of clinical knowledge and expertise. Through their education and practical experience, they have acquired a deep understanding of disease prevention, health promotion, and evidence-based interventions. This foundation equips them with the tools to critically analyse health policies, identify gaps, and propose innovative solutions. By actively participating in policy discussions, nurses can lend their clinical insights to shape policies prioritizing the well-being of individuals, families, and communities [3-5].

Furthermore, nurses can uniquely engage with communities and understand their health needs and concerns. Their regular interactions with patients enable them to gain insights into the social, economic, and cultural determinants influencing health outcomes. Leveraging this knowledge, nurses can effectively advocate for policies that address health inequities and reduce disparities across various population groups. Their grassroots perspective ensures that policies are rooted in the realities faced by communities, thereby enhancing their relevance and impact.

Another crucial aspect of nurses' potential as public health advisors lies in their holistic approach to care. Nurses are trained to view individuals within the context of their environments, considering their physical health and mental, emotional, and social well-being. This holistic perspective is invaluable when formulating policies that recognize the multifaceted nature of health and the interconnectedness between various sectors. Nurses can contribute their expertise to policies that promote healthy environments, support mental health initiatives, and advocate for social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and employment [6].

Methodology

India faces numerous health challenges, including a high burden

of infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and health inequalities. The healthcare system struggles to meet the growing demands of a rapidly expanding population. While doctors play a crucial role, there is a shortage of qualified physicians, especially in rural and remote areas. This shortage further limits access to healthcare, exacerbating health disparities.

Conversely, nurses are the largest group of healthcare providers in India and are widely distributed across the country. They work in various settings, including hospitals, primary care centres, community health centres, and outreach programs. Their extensive presence in communities positions them well to address public health concerns. However, their potential as public health advisors remains largely untapped. Even the recently launched Public Health Management Cadre has reduced the role of nurses with public health qualifications to merely procurement and IT functions [7].

Discussion

Enhancing public health education for nurses

To effectively utilize nurses as public health advisors, it is essential to strengthen their public health knowledge and skills during their education and training. Incorporating comprehensive public health courses into nursing curricula can equip nurses with the necessary tools to understand the social determinants of health, health promotion, disease prevention, and community engagement. Nurses can provide valuable insights and expertise when advising policymakers on health-related matters by enhancing their understanding of public health principles [8].

Strengthening interprofessional collaboration

Collaboration between healthcare professionals is vital for effective public health interventions. Nurses can liaise between

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various stakeholders, facilitating coordination and cooperation among healthcare providers, policymakers, community leaders, and non-governmental organizations. By actively engaging in interprofessional collaborations, nurses can contribute their unique perspectives, experiences, and evidence-based practices to inform policy decisions, ultimately leading to better health outcomes [9-11].

Advocacy for health promotion and prevention

Nurses, with their direct and frequent interactions with individuals, families, and communities, are well-positioned to advocate for health promotion and prevention strategies. They can be pivotal in educating and empowering communities about healthy lifestyles, immunizations, disease prevention, and early detection. By actively engaging in health promotion activities, nurses can influence behavioural change and reduce the burden of preventable diseases [12].

Bridging gaps in access to healthcare

India's healthcare system faces significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services, particularly in rural and underserved areas. As community health officers, nurses can serve as a crucial link in bridging this gap. They can provide essential healthcare services, health screenings, and health education in communities with limited access to doctors. Expanding the role of nurses as primary care providers, especially in underserved areas, will improve the healthcare access, leading to better health outcomes [13-16].

Conclusion

Embracing a futuristic approach to achieving health in all policies in India necessitates harnessing the untapped potential of nurses as public health advisors. Their combination of clinical knowledge, community engagement, and holistic care perspectives makes them valuable contributors to policy-making. By involving nurses in policy discussions and decision-making, India can leverage their expertise to develop evidence-based, contextually appropriate policies prioritizing its diverse population's health and well-being. Empowering nurses as public health advisors is a transformative step towards realizing the vision of a healthier and more equitable India.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

It is a commentary Paper so this is not applicable to this paper (NA).

Competing interests

Authors do not have any competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

Diksha LNU and Ankita Sharma did a desk review of the available literature and policy documents to form a problem statement and wrote the current situation with an introduction while Diksha LNU and Ashu Ranga wrote the discussion and conclusion part based on the analysis of existing literature. All authors have equally participated in formulating this paper.

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