Public Health for Sexual Health Physicians

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Outline

- To have an understanding of the principles of public health
- To understand how sexual health physicians can exercise public health leadership within health services
What is Public Health?

"...the science and art of promoting and protecting health and well-being, preventing ill-health and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society."

The UK Faculty of Public Health
Domains of Public Health

- Inequalities
- Education
- Housing
- Employment
- Family
- Community
- Lifestyles
- Surveillance
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Health Improvement

- Clinical effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Service planning
- Audit and evaluation
- Clinical governance
- Equity

Health Protection

- Infectious diseases
- Chemicals and poisons
- Radiation
- Emergency response
- Environmental health hazards

Improving Services
Frameworks for conceptualising public health issues
Primary, secondary & tertiary prevention

Example: congenital syphilis

Primary
• Intervening before health effects occur
  Health promotion eg condom use

Secondary
• Screening to identify diseases in the earliest stages, before the onset of signs and symptoms
  Antenatal screening for syphilis in pregnancy

Tertiary
• Managing disease post-diagnosis to slow or stop disease progression
  Access to treatment for congenital syphilis and supportive care

Social determinants of health

“The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels”

World Health Organisation
What are the social determinants of sexual health?

- Individual factors
- Living & working conditions
- Lifestyle factors
- Socioeconomic, cultural, social
- Social & community networks
What are the social determinants of sexual health?

• Individual factors
  • Age, sex, gender
  • Genetics

• Lifestyle factors
  • Sexual behaviour
  • Drug & alcohol use

• Social & community networks
  • Social capital
  • Sexual and social networks
  • Intimate relationships

• Living & working conditions
  • Education
  • Employment
  • Access to services
  • Safe & secure housing

• Socioeconomic, cultural, social
  • Legislation
  • Social attitudes
  • Stigma
  • Taxation/funding for services & prevention

Life course approach

• Long term effects on health in later life, related to biological/social exposures as a foetus and during childhood, adolescence and early adult life
• Acknowledges that there are additional effects from exposures later in life
• Has supported efforts relating to early interventions for young families, etc.
GU clinicians as public health leaders

Public Health Leadership in Health Services

- Understanding local needs and priorities
- Advocating for service development
- Influencing commissioning
- Understanding how services are evaluated
- Using and improving surveillance data
- Notifying infectious diseases
- Identifying and responding to outbreaks
Understanding the population and setting the priorities

• Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs)
  • Used by local authorities to summarise and review health needs of a population and develop agreed priorities for action
  • Will include sexual health

NHS Commissioning Cycle
Notifiable disease & Outbreak control

Notifiable diseases

• Statutory duty to report to local Health Protection Team
• Laboratories report on confirmation of a notifiable organism
• Some should be reported urgently by telephone e.g. Acute Meningitis
• Some reported by fax/post e.g. Scarlet Fever

If by post, include relevant info – e.g. occupation, travel history and if patient is aware of diagnosis.
Inform the patient they might be contacted by the HPT.

Outbreaks

'the occurrence of more cases than expected in a particular population, in a specific geographical area and over a specified period of time'

(not just the total number of cases but perhaps the number of cases among a particular group)

Outbreaks

Reasons for apparent increases in cases:

• An increase in the population at risk (the denominator)
• Random fluctuations
• A change in testing/diagnosis
• An error in recording
• A real outbreak
How can the GU clinician contribute to outbreak control?

• Identifying outbreaks through reporting of infections
• Expert advice to outbreak control teams
• Knowledge of populations
• Case finding & partner notification
• Provision of treatment & vaccination
• Liaison with voluntary sector & local venues
• Contribute to guidance and standards

Health care is vital to all of us some of the time, but public health is vital to all of us all of the time.

C. Everett Koop
Useful links

HIV & STI surveillance data & tools

Sexual health commissioning

Guidance for managing STI outbreaks

Notifiable disease guidance

Questions?
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