

Chapter 1: The Why, Where, How, and What of Public Health Practice: An Introduction and Overview

ESSAY

1. Explain the difference between public health and public health practice.

ANS:

Public health is an organized societal effort to promote, protect, improve, and, when necessary, restore the health of individuals, specified groups, or the entire population. It is a way of thinking, a set of disciplines, an institution of society, and a manner of practice. Public health practice involves the application of knowledge, skills, and competencies to perform essential public health services and other activities to improve the population's health. Public health practice is about the art of doing public health, just as the practice of medicine is about the art of doing medicine.

PTS: 1

2. List at least five important public health achievements of the twentieth century and explain why they are important.

ANS: The answer may be any 5 of the following 10. They are all important because they contributed significantly to improving the health of the U.S. population.

Vaccination – resulted in the eradication of smallpox and polio and the control of other infectious diseases such as measles.

Motor-vehicle safety – improved safety measures for vehicles and highways resulted in reductions in motor-vehicle-related deaths.

Safer workplaces – resulted in reduced workplace injuries and deaths.

Control of infectious diseases – improved water quality and better sanitation reduced cases and deaths due to diseases such as typhoid and cholera.

Decline in deaths due to coronary heart disease and stroke – resulted from reducing risk factors such as smoking and improved access to diagnosis and treatment.

Safer and healthier foods – resulted from decreases in microbial contamination and increases in nutritional content.

Healthier mothers and babies – resulted from better hygiene, improved nutrition, and better access to health care.

Family planning – resulted from improved contraceptive options and access to family planning services.

Fluoridation of drinking water – expanded to include millions; believed to contribute to preventing tooth decay.

Recognition of tobacco as a health hazard – resulted in reductions in smoking and other tobacco use and reduced exposure to environmental tobacco smoke; reductions in smoking-related deaths.

PTS: 1

3. Define the *why*, *where*, *how*, and *what* of public health practice.

ANS:

Why – to improve the health of a given population; involves issues of fairness, equity, and social justice.

Where – in local (county, city) health departments, in state-level health departments and related agencies, at the federal level through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other agencies within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and through analogous structures and systems within Native American Tribes and the U.S. Territories.

How – by integrating science-based interventions with community preferences to improve population health. Involves developing and identifying evidence, program development and prioritization, translating and disseminating science and evidence on programs and policies, and applying elements of evaluation to determine the outcomes, impact, and effect of practice.

What – the major programs, services, and activities that are delivered or take place on a day-to-day basis in local, state, and federal public health practice settings.

PTS: 1