

ROLE OF A HOMOEOPHYSICIAN IN APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTION IN THE CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

DR. G. R. MOHAN, D.H.M.S., M.B.S. (HOM.), Osm., Hyderabad

Communicable diseases are the main contributors to the mortality in the developed and developing countries. Many of the developed countries have eliminated most of the communicable diseases through good sanitation, preventive vaccines and by taking balanced diet which increases the general resistance of an individual. In India certain diseases like upper respiratory tract infections, diarrhoea, influenza, dysentery, malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid are posing problems in the control. Apart from these diseases cholera, measles, infective hepatitis etc. occur in epidemic forms. The mortality due to non-communicable diseases is comparatively less. Still the main problem in India is poor environmental health, malnutrition and increase in growth rate. Due to the various national programmes the life expectancy has shot up from 32.1 years in 1941-1952 to 52.6 years by 1971. It is still low compared to 70-80 years in developed countries. Infant mortality rate from 183 per 1000 live births (in 1941-1952) has gone down to 113 per 1000 during (1961-1970) as compared to 9.6-7 per 1000 in developed countries. The death rate has been brought down from 27.4 per 1000 in (1941-1950) to 11 per 1000 in (1971), i.e., almost to half. In India 80% of the population lives in rural area, 90% are illiterates, 25% of villages are without safe drinking water and poor sanitary condition. To improve the health care of our country medical personnel should take the village as a focal point.

Modern concept of effective delivery of medical care to a community involves not only the use of curative services but also active participation in preventive-medicine. Prevention is a Latin derivation from *praevenire* means to come before. Even Dr. Hahnemann wrote in his *Organon of Medicine* in aphorism 4 that "He is likewise a preserver of health, if he knows the things that derange health and cause disease, and how to remove them from persons in health".

The physician should understand the dynamic natural history of various diseases. The communicable diseases are due to inter-action of disease agent (exciting factor), host (human being) and environment. In Homoeopathy we give less importance to microbes since they are end products. Predisposing factors like physical agents and environmental changes can only effect when there is susceptibility in the person. Susceptibility is inherited with miasmatic base such as psora, sycosis and syphilis. The fundamental cause is psoric miasm. Communicable diseases which spread in a community from person to person either by inhalation, ingestion, inoculation and by fomites and make them suffer as per their susceptibility caused by psora. Every

homoeo-physician should enquire about epidemiological features of a disease while taking case history, i.e., who have been affected, when and where, is known as descriptive epidemiology. Why has it occurred; What to do, is known as analytical epidemiology.

Prevention can be classified into primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary prevention applies at the period of pre-pathogenesis and is achieved through health promotion and specific protection. Secondary prevention aims at early diagnosis of disease and limitation of disability. Tertiary prevention involves rehabilitation.

Primary prevention: Promotion of health can be achieved by health education. "It is a process which affects changes in the health practices of people and in the knowledge and attitude related to such changes". Educate the people about health, disease and the mode of transmission of disease and about simple ways to prevent them. For example, in the case of tuberculosis, a physician not only gives the treatment but also tells him about the importance of personal hygiene, i.e., use of a kerchief while coughing, not to mix with people and danger of indiscriminate spitting so that the risk of transmission to others is reduced.

Malnutrition increases the susceptibility of an individual to a disease. Old methods of starvation during disease should be discouraged and balanced diets should be encouraged especially for children, pregnant and nursing women.

Overcrowding leads to air borne infection like T.B. Indiscriminate defecation leads to hookworm infection and also to fly breeding.

Specific protection can be achieved in our system by prophylactic remedy. In Homoeopathy it is one that is constitutionally similar to the individual. It is also proved by experience that persons strictly following the homoeo line in their medical measures rarely fall victim to any epidemic disease. Few nosodes also reduce susceptibility, predisposition to disease and also act like prophylactic medicines for prevention of diseases. Selection of a genus epidemicus is also helpful.

Isolation is necessary to prevent transmission of the infectious agent from infected person to susceptible host and to protect the patient from exposure to secondary infection by contact with other persons during the patient's active illness. In hospitals patient is kept in cubicles. In home a separate room may be used, in villages a separate hut or one corner of the hut may be utilised.

Quarantine is the limitation of freedom of movement of contacts of a disease for a period of maximum incubation period of that disease. Quarantine is not so commonly used now-a-days and is replaced by surveillance of contacts.

Environmental sanitation means removal from the environment of living agents which have escaped from their human or animal reservoirs and which are able to survive for varying lengths of time in the environment. This in-

cludes sanitary measures in handling water, milk and food, control of vectors and disinfection.

Secondary prevention: Early detection and prompt treatment is done by the help of laboratory service. It is of tremendous importance especially in the diagnosis and management of communicable diseases. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment can help to prevent further spread of the communicable disease and also can prevent complications for instance, if a severely dehydrated case of cholera is diagnosed early the patient can be saved by giving correctly selected similitum and intravenous fluids. Also, by notifying higher medical authorities we can prevent further spread of disease.

A contact is any person known to have been in such association with an infected person as to acquire the infection. Control of contacts is achieved either by giving homoeo prophylaxis or constitutional drugs or genus epidemics and by surveillance or quarantine.

Notification is very important to prevent and control communicable diseases in a community. Notification should be prompt, accurate and complete to the local health authority. It is important in following ways: (a) It provides data to study the incidence of the disease and its distribution in the population. (b) For early and efficient preventive measures to be taken whenever necessary. (c) To allow the medical officer or D.M.S. to inform local doctors of the communicable diseases present in an area. (d) To allow provisions for requisite treatment. (e) For medical research.

Limitation of disability involves prevention of further clinical advance of a disease, i.e., prevention of complication and secondary infection, limitation of disability on an individual basis. The patient himself should do as much as possible, e.g., by cooperation with his doctor he should strive for rapid, gentle and permanent restoration of health. If not, certain diseases like tuberculosis will be again reactivated.

Tertiary prevention: Rehabilitation is an integral part of medical care. This process of restoring an individual to the highest possible level of functional abilities following disease (like paralytic poliomyelitis or injury) to a condition whereby he is able to live as near as possible a normal life is applicable during the phase of tertiary prevention. This is achieved by physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, audiology, medico social worker.

An epidemiological concept aimed at natural history of disease is advocated for the effective prevention of communicable diseases.
