

PREVENTION IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

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Abstract: The article analyzes the reasons for the radical change in the structure of mortality of the world population over the past 100 years, summarizes the experience of large regional projects and national programs carried out in various countries of Europe and Asia and proving the high effectiveness of preventive measures in reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases.

Keywords: medical prevention, healthy lifestyle, non-communicable diseases.

INTRODUCTION

Today we clearly understand that over the past 80-100 years the structure of mortality in the world has changed dramatically (Fig. 1) [7]. If at the beginning of the last century about 70% of people died from one or another infectious disease, often taking on the character of pandemics, and only in 25% of cases the immediate cause of death was non-communicable diseases (NCDs), today we are seeing the exact opposite picture. Currently, about 60% of the world's population dies from NCDs, while the share of infectious pathology in the mortality structure does not exceed 30%.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There are many reasons behind such global changes, which have led, on the one hand, to a decrease in morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases, and on the other hand, to an increase in similar indicators for non-infectious pathology. The most important of them, of course, is the discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in the late 1920s and the subsequent rapid development of the antibiotic era, which significantly changed infectious epidemiology in the world. After the revolutionary discoveries of Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch in the late 19th century, which established the etiological role of a number of microorganisms in the genesis of some infectious diseases, the subsequent emergence and development of virology, the creation and mass, in fact total, use of vaccination literally from the first days of a child's life led to a significant decrease in morbidity and mortality from many infectious diseases [1].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevention in healthcare refers to the actions taken to reduce the occurrence of diseases, injuries, and other health issues before they happen. It aims to address the root causes of illness and improve overall well-being, thereby reducing the burden on healthcare systems. While significant progress has been made over the years, much more remains to be done to ensure that prevention is integrated into healthcare systems worldwide. This article explores the advances in healthcare prevention, current strategies, and what needs to be done moving forward.

What Has Been Done: Key Advances in Preventive Healthcare

1. **Vaccination Programs** Vaccines are one of the most successful and cost-effective preventive health measures ever developed. Global vaccination programs have been instrumental in reducing, and in some cases eliminating, deadly diseases. For example, the eradication of

smallpox and the near-eradication of polio are major public health achievements. Routine vaccinations for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, and influenza continue to save millions of lives annually. More recently, the rapid development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines demonstrated the potential for quick, large-scale prevention efforts [2].

2. **Health Education and Awareness Campaigns** Over the past few decades, public health education has played a vital role in encouraging healthier lifestyles and behaviors. Campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet, and lack of exercise have had a positive impact on reducing the incidence of preventable diseases like lung cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Anti-smoking campaigns, in particular, have seen considerable success in many countries, leading to decreased smoking rates and associated health risks.

3. **Screening and Early Detection** Early detection of diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and hypertension has improved outcomes and quality of life for millions. Programs like mammography screening for breast cancer, Pap smears for cervical cancer, and colonoscopies for colorectal cancer have contributed to reducing mortality rates by identifying cancers in their early, treatable stages. Routine screening for high blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes has also helped prevent complications from these chronic conditions, such as stroke, kidney failure, and heart disease.

4. **Healthier Environments and Legislation** Governments have implemented policies that support preventive healthcare on a larger scale. These include regulations on air and water quality, workplace safety, and food labeling. Restrictions on tobacco advertising, trans fats, and sugary drinks have been enacted to reduce exposure to harmful substances that contribute to chronic diseases. Health and safety regulations in the workplace have reduced the risk of occupational injuries and illnesses.

What Needs to Be Done: Challenges and Areas for Improvement

1. **Addressing Health Inequalities** Despite the progress made in preventive healthcare, significant health disparities remain between different populations, often driven by socio-economic factors, race, geography, and access to healthcare. Marginalized groups may lack access to essential preventive services, leading to higher rates of preventable diseases. To truly make prevention universal, healthcare systems must address these disparities by ensuring that everyone, regardless of income or background, has access to preventive care [3].

2. **Expanding Access to Preventive Services** Preventive services are often underutilized due to cost, lack of awareness, or limited access in rural or underserved areas. Expanding access to primary care, offering free or low-cost screening programs, and promoting regular check-ups can help ensure that more people benefit from early detection and preventive interventions. Telemedicine and mobile health technologies can also bridge gaps in access, especially in remote areas [4].

CONCLUSION

While significant strides have been made in preventive healthcare, the work is far from over. As healthcare systems around the world face growing challenges from chronic diseases, aging populations, and emerging health threats, prioritizing prevention is key to ensuring healthier societies and reducing healthcare costs. There must be continued investment in education, accessibility, technology, and mental health, alongside efforts to address health inequalities and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life. Through a combination

of policy changes, technological advancements, and societal shifts, we can build a more robust and effective preventive healthcare system for the future.

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