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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN PREVENTIVE AND SOCIAL MEDICINE

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#### Abstract

Preventive medicine is exactly what it sounds like - it aims to **prevent** sickness before it happens. The ideology behind preventive medicine focuses on protecting, promoting, and maintaining health and well-being. It also aims to avert disease, disability, and death on an individual basis, as well as on a large scale in communities and populations. Preventive medicine is promoted by all physicians, though some choose to specialize in it. Physicians in this specialty use biostatistics and epidemiology, as well as a mix of medical, social, economic, and behavioural sciences. They may evaluate health services or manage health care organizations. They also study the cause of disease and injury within specific population segments. Preventive medicine is an interdisciplinary branch of medicine that focuses on the whole patient and the many factors influencing their health. It holds a broad scope, encompassing elements of socioeconomics, the role of legislation, health equity, and the disparities found in communities and certain populations.

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#### Introduction:-

Preventive and Social Medicine (PSM) is relatively a new branch of medicine. It is often considered synonymous with Community Medicine, Public Health, and Community Health in India. All these shares common ground, i.e., prevention of disease and promotion of health. In short, PSM provides comprehensive health services ranging from preventive, promotive, curative to rehabilitative services. The importance of the speciality of PSM has been very well recognised and emphasized repeatedly from grass root to international levels, not only in health sector but in other related sectors too. Whereas clinical specialities look after individual patient, PSM has to think and act in terms of whole community. The scope of medicine has expanded during the last few decades to include not only health problems of individuals, but those of communities as well. If we want to achieve health for all, community medicine will definitely be the key factor during the next millennium.

#### Preventive Medicine

Preventive medicine is the practice of promoting preventive health care to improve patient well-being. This is a medical speciality that focuses on the health of individuals and communities. The goal of preventive medicine is to promote health and well-being and prevent disease, disability, and death. Preventive medicine specialists must have a broad range of medical skills as well as expertise in behavioural, economic, environmental, and social sciences. A doctor of preventive medicine can help create healthier communities, save lives, and transform healthcare systems. The goal is to ultimately prevent disease, disability, and death.

**Why Is Preventive Medicine Important?**

1. Preventive medicine physicians focus on disease prevention and health promotion to try to keep people—and entire communities—from getting sick.
2. Specialists in the field assess medical conditions and perform physical examinations, make diagnoses and develop treatment plans, evaluate health programs and policies, and use diagnostic studies and tests. They may help people quit smoking, lose weight, eat healthfully, or reduce alcohol or drug use.
3. Preventive medicine physicians also help ensure healthy pregnancies and safe work environments, treat depression, work in poison control, and administer vaccinations to prevent such diseases and viruses as COVID-19, influenza, measles, meningitis, polio, pneumonia, or shingles.
4. Some preventive medicine specialists focus on the health of such people as astronauts or undersea divers who spend prolonged periods of time in extreme atmospheric environments.

**What Is Preventive Medicine's Overall Goal?**

Preventive care includes the assessment of behavioural, cultural, and social influences on health, as well as:

1. Biostatistics
2. Blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes tests
3. Cancer screenings such as colonoscopies and mammograms
4. Control of environmental and occupational factors
5. Counselling on various health topics
6. Epidemiology
7. Health services management and administration
8. Toxicology
9. Vaccinations
10. Wellness visits

**Challenges In Preventive And Social Medicine**

In the field of Public Health & Preventive Medicine, tremendous changes have taken place, but greater changes can be anticipated in the coming decades. Ideas and policies cannot be static and planning must have enough flexibility to cope with the fast-changing world of science and technology, of industrialization and urbanization. It is obvious that new horizons and super-specialties are fast emerging in Preventive and Social Medicine, like Epidemiology, MCH (Maternal and Child Health), IEC (Information Education Communication), Health Management, Health Economics, Nutrition, Demography, Health System Research, Environmental Health, etc. Current developments in Information Technology will certainly alter the face of Preventive and Social Medicine in the coming future.

There are many challenges in the field of Public Health. One of the challenges, which are successfully met, is "Eradication of Smallpox". This is a wonderful achievement which all of us are proud of. Another disease, which is successfully eliminated, is Guinea worm disease. There were setbacks in some of the programmes like Malaria, Tuberculosis that made us rethink and re-modify the strategies and re-implement these national health programmes.

As we are able to control some diseases, there will be new emerging as well re-emerging diseases. This faculty has to be remained alert all the time and prepared for meeting the new challenges.

Public health practice in turn, looks at population level issues that affect health and a clinical training is not necessary. I propose here that public health practice can also be practiced at three levels — first at community level (micro), second at an organization or district level (meso) and; finally at province, national or global level (macro) where issues like legislations, trade, fiscal measures are included. However, unlike clinical medicine, this division is not hierarchical. One could work at all the three levels simultaneously, as many of us indeed do. Most trainings in public health are not linked to a community or health system as is a hallmark of community medicine training. Community medicine, in my proposed model, borrows two levels from Public Health (micro and meso) and includes primary level clinical care

**Development Of Preventive And Social Medicine**

The Government of India launched the Re-orientation of Medical Education scheme in the year 1977. The scheme aims at involving medical colleges directly in the health care delivery system by accepting total responsibility for promotive, preventive and curative health care of at least 3 Community Development Blocks in the first instance, ultimately extending to the whole district. The progress of the Scheme has been extremely slow in most colleges.

There is hardly any impact on orienting medical students towards rural health care, which was its primary aim. Medical graduates from most medical colleges still pass out with the same pattern of education, which was present earlier, with more focus on curative medicine and urban oriented approach. The health care system in India including medical education, health care services etc. as such, and not only Preventive and Social Medicine departments can be held responsible for this.

### **Opportunities In Preventive And Social Medicine**

The public health medical specialty promotes health and well-being on a larger scale. These physicians work with communities and certain segments of the population, combining prevention-based clinical knowledge with population-based public health. Public health physicians analyse data on public health problems and research the causes behind them. They also develop strategies to tackle health issues in the public, which can lead to new programs promoting overall health and preventing the spread of disease. Public health physicians also consult with other officials in the field to develop legislation benefitting the health of entire communities.

### **Conclusion:-**

Preventative medicine refers to the prevention of death or disease by taking precautions to avert the disease. Prevention can be of the community as a whole or an individual. It is well researched that seven out of ten people die out of chronic disease; hence it becomes important to prevent the disease. Prevention can be of diseases like Tuberculosis, STI's (Sexually Transmitted Infection), etc. or from diseases like obesity, asthma, sinus. Preventative medication is usually encouraged by the physicians but a few of them specialize in this field. It is a newly developed and fastest growing branch in medical science and after the COVID-19 pandemic all around the world, it is emerging and will be one of the most recognized sectors.

Preventative medicine is the growing field of research and has a vast career opportunity. The job options are growing all across the globe. As we all know prevention is better than cure, preventative medication suggests easy ways like a balanced diet, proper exercise, etc. for well-being. Preventative medication is spreading its roots and expanding.

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