



Parental involvement to improve children's health practices

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ABSTRACT

Behavioral change remains the back born for healthier lives of individuals bearing in mind the current situation where, lifestyle diseases are the leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality.

While governments are using substantial amounts of funds to treat diseases and ensure that children are immunized, change in behavior still has a great role in prevention of lifestyle diseases. Due to the cost involved in treating diseases as well as the consequences of the disease effects, prevention should be recognized as an approach of choice.

Children are to be targeted in as far as behavioral change is concerned because they can learn new behaviours and adopt them to be part of their lifestyle. However, children first learn life skills and behaviors from their parents, later they learn from their peers. Hence, the role of parents, especially mothers in establishing early basic health practices is of great importance if we are to change the community towards the desired goals. Parents should be taught what is proper for them to pass the same to their children.

Diseases have both direct and indirect impact on children and their ability to thrive in school. Poor health can lead to loss of school days and even if the child goes to school there will be poor focus and concentration. A sick child will not be able to feed properly and may end up being malnourished. It is a known fact that poor nutrition results in poor growth and development of a child hence poor learning ability. A sick child is also affected both psychologically and socially; additionally his/her self-image and confidence may be impaired.

Educating parents, especially mothers on their children's healthy desired behaviours may be cheaper than treating diseases which are due to lifestyles. Use of leaflets, pamphlets, short text messages as well as phone calls has proved to be effective in delivering health information to parents. Parents may not use the information to change their own behaviors, but if instructed to impart that information to their children, they often do so. When children are still at the age which allows learning new ideas, they can easily adapt newly taught behaviours. Once a considerable number of children in a particular society has learnt good behaviours, they can disseminate the knowledge to their peers and ultimately to the whole society.

This can be a cost effective and sustainable means to prevent diseases through behavioral change while improving children's well-being and school performance.

BIOGRAPHY

Zacharias shukuru, currently working as a lecturer in University Of Dodoma, Tanzania.