



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION IN HEALTH EDUCATION

Introduction

Health education is a process by which individuals and groups of people learn to behave in a manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance or restoration of health. Communication in relation to health education involves different methods like lectures, group or panel discussions, symposia, poster or exhibit



presentation etc. Every methods of health education have its own merits, drawbacks as well as their own sphere of effectiveness. In addition it has to overcome the barriers of communication (e.g. physiological, psychological, environmental and cultural). Research on the effectiveness of different modes of health education dissemination is already in progress to examine the utility of a specific mode of communication in a specific setting [2,3] on a specific group. It has been observed that different educational methods may be specially suitable for different groups of people depending upon their age, sex, educational qualification, background and nature of job [4].

Comparative assessment of effectiveness of different educational methods has also been done on some target groups in different communicational settings [5]. Imparting health education to an educated group is a special arena of interest because of the fact that this educated group may have a major role in the propagation of the achieved knowledge in future. This is why communication of health education in a gathering of educated people (e.g. conferences) should have separate specifications in relation to its content and mode of communication.

The important thing to remember is that effective health communication is seldom achieved through the use of one method alone. Nearly always, a combination of techniques is needed to achieve behavioural changes. Both effectiveness and costs must be considered in choosing a combination of techniques.

Selection of Teaching Methods and Materials

1. The selection of the teaching methods and aids depends on
2. 1. The type of the message
3. 2. The purpose
4. 3. The people addressed
5. 4. Availability of resources
6. 5. Availability of skills.

Methods:

Methods of imparting health education can be furnished through the following three different ways:

- a) Correlation with different subjects
- b) Educational methods
- c) Teaching aids

A) CORRELATION WITH DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

In imparting the health education, teacher should correlate health to General science, Biology, Home Science, History, Geography and English etc. So, correlation of health instruction can be best ensured effectively with the following subjects.

i) General sciences:

The whole of the scientific studies are relevant to the students of health education. They provide essential knowledge and principles of matter. Many aspects of physical science are involved such as the transference of heat, principle of levers, ventilation breathing, electricity; all have their contribution to make in varying degrees. Many chemical processes are involved particularly in breathing and digestion. These are nothing, but health teaching.

ii) Biology:

The special contribution of biology towards the teaching of health education is important. The biology course includes a study of structure and working of human body which is important in health education. Biology also includes various forms of ecology, the study of living things in terms of their environment. In biology, we also study the growth of animals and cells, reproduction, pollination, fertilization bacteriology, hereditary, gene and chromosome which is related to health education.

iii) Home Science:

Home science is also very much effective in teaching of health education. It is concern with the personal cleanliness of house, care of personal possession, management of home, preparation and serving of meals, storage of food, care of clothing, care of infant, sanitation and disposal of waste which add to quality and pleasure of family life in later year.



iv) History:

The teacher of history today has become very generally aware of the important part played by hygiene in determining the life of people in different ages and civilizations. While teaching health education the pupils attention may be drawn to the ideas which have prevailed in a given period about sanitation, housing, cleanliness, water supply and habits of eating and drinking treatment of disease and similar topics. The examples given by teachers like life and health of the people of Mahenjodaro and Harappa civilization, the great plague at London, Health, disease and living habit of the people in ancient India , Moghul period, and the British period are very interesting.

v) Geography:

Geography teaching is no less bearing on health matters. The teacher of geography can point to major environmental factors, such as climate, which influence the health of the individual and the community. The climatic condition of polar region, tropical countries, and temperate zones are the topic of geography which is also important in health teaching. Some parts of the world, such as Switzerland, California, and New Zealand have become famous health resorts, where as other parts are notoriously unhealthy. So topics such as climate, food production, diet of people, air, water have a real contribution both to geography and to the study of health education.

vi) Language and Literature:

Language and literature is a vital means for imparting health education and promoting healthy living among school students. There is a deeper connection between literature and health. Young people of today are still forming their standards of value, their attitude to sex and other physical aspects of life greatly

influenced by their surroundings; find a place in literature, which has value to health. Some poets have written poems regarding good health and by reading these the young boys can inculcate good lessons of health.

B) EDUCATIONAL METHODS

a) Group discussions

Health education has been quick to recognize that groups provide an ideal set-up for learning in a way that leads to change and action. Discussion in a group allows people to say what is in their minds. They can talk about their problems, share ideas, support and encourage each other to solve problems and change their behaviour. For sharing of ideas an ideal group is the one with 5-10 members.

b) Meetings

Meetings are good for teaching something of importance to a large group of people. They are held to gather information, share ideas, take decisions, and make plans to solve problems. Meetings are different from group discussions. A group discussion is free and informal, while meetings are more organized. Meetings are an important part of successful self-help projects.

c) Clubs

There are many kinds of organizations to which women, men and young people belong. Clubs are becoming popular in many areas. They provide an opportunity for a systematic way of teaching over an extended period of time. E.g. a group of citizens could form an association to deal with problems related to a major local disease or to protect the environment.

d) Demonstrations

A demonstration is a step-by step procedure that is performed before a group. They involve a mixture of theoretical teaching and of practical work, which makes them lively. It is used to show how to do something. The main purpose of

demonstrations is helping people learn new skills. The size of the group should be small to let members get the chance to practice. It is particularly useful when combined with a home visit. This allows people to work with familiar materials available in the locality.



e) Health talks

The most natural way of communicating with people is to talk with them. In health education, this could be done with one person, a family, or with groups (small or large). Health talks have been, and remain, the most common way to share health knowledge and facts. However, we need to make it more than advice and make effective by combining it with other methods. In principle, it should be given to smaller group (5 to 10 people). In health talks, unclear points could be asked and discussed.

f) Songs

People sing to express ideas and feelings, such as love and sadness, to tell story of a famous person, commemorate religious days etc. In addition to expression of feelings, songs can also be used to give ideas about health. Topics can be given that you want to make popular to those persons for synthesis and dissemination.

g) Stories

Stories often tell about the deeds of famous heroes or of people who lived in the village long ago. Story telling is highly effective and can be developed in any situation or culture, that and requires no money or equipment. It should include some strong emotions like sadness, anger; humour, or happiness as well as some tension and surprise. An older person, instead of directly criticizing the behaviour

of youth, may tell stories to make his/her points. Stories may also be a way of re-telling interesting events that happened in a village. So stories can entertain, spread news and information so that people are encouraged to look at their attitudes and values, and to help people decide how to solve their problems.

h) Drama

Drama is a good means to entertain people in a message. Their preparation, practice and others may incur time and money. This means that it is somehow difficult to prepare repeatedly. Yet, they are extremely useful for conferences, workshops and refresher courses. Dramas should have one main learning objective but can often include 2 or 3 other less important objectives as well. Alike stories, dramas make us look at our own behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values in the light of what we are told or shown. Plays are interesting because you can both see and hear them.

i) Role - playing

Role-playing consists of the acting out of real-life situations and problems. The player tries to behave in a way that the character might behave when faced with a given situation or problem. It is used to show different people feel about a problem and what they should do about it. Role-playing can be used to start off a discussion, to see what possible consequences of a certain action are, and to develop a better understanding of why people feel as they do. We learn about our own behaviour during a role-play, we can discover how our attitudes and values encourage cooperation and problem solving or, how our attitude and values create problems.

C) TEACHING AIDS

Teaching materials include all materials that are used as teaching aids to support the communication process and bring desired effect on the audience. The

following are some selected teaching aids that are commonly used in health education programs.

a) Audios

Audios include anything heard such as spoken-word (talk), music or any other sounds. Talks are the most commonly used audio teaching methods.

Characteristics of audios:

- Effective when based on similar or known experience
- Could be distorted or misunderstood when translated
- Easily forgotten

B) Visual aids

Visuals are objects that are seen. They are one of the strongest methods of communicating messages; particularly when accompanied with interactive methods.

Advantages

- They can easily arouse interest of the students.
- It provides a clear mental picture of the message.
- It can speed up and enhance understanding.
- It can stimulate effective thinking capability.
- Encourage active learning process.
- Help retain good memory.

c) Leaflets

Leaflets are unfolded sheet of printed material. Leaflets can be very appealing if their message is simple and clear, and if the language is understood by the reader. In preparing them, short sentences and paragraphs should be used, illustrated with simple drawings or pictures that are easily understood. They need to be pre-tested before



distributing to the villagers.

d) Newspapers/Newsletters

Newspapers might be of some help in reaching the villagers. Very often, though, the national or regional newspapers do not reach smaller communities, or the people are unable to read them. In this case, newsletters, written by the villagers themselves, teachers and extension workers can become the communities' newspaper. Place copies on a bulletin board or wall in a public meeting places (market, well, bar).

e) Photographs

Photographs can be used to show people new ideas or new skills being practiced. They can also be used to support and encourage new behaviour. They are best used with individuals and small groups. People can compare photos taken of malnourished children in the village before and after receiving treatment.

f) Posters

A poster is a large sheet of paper, often about 60 cm wide by 90cm high with words and pictures or symbols that put across a message. It is widely used by commercial firms for advertising products, but can also be used for preventive purposes.

g) Flipchart

A flipchart is made up of a number of posters that are meant to be shown one after the other. In this way, several steps or aspects of a central topic can be presented such as about family planning. Their purpose is to give information and instructions, or record information when prepared with blank pieces of paper.

h) Flannel graphs

A flannel graph is a board covered with flannel cloth. The flannel graph is one of the most effective and easily used teaching aids because it is cheap and portable. Pictures and words can be placed on the board to reinforce or illustrate

your message. It is very useful with people who do not read and in groups of less than 30 people.

i) Displays

A display is an arrangement of real objects, models, pictures, poster, and other items, which people can look at and learn from. Like a poster, it provides ideas and information. Whereas a poster contains only one idea, a display has many. E.g. how a child develops and grows.

Mass Media

It is one way of giving health education. The communication that is aimed to reach the masses or the people at large is called mass communication. The media that are generally used for mass communication go by the name of mass media. The commonly used mass media are microphones or public address system, radio, television, cinema, newsprint, posters, exhibitions. Mass media are the best methods for rapid spread of simple information and facts to a large population at low cost. However, the major concerns with this method of communication are availability, accessibility and popularity in a given community.

Films

Films are the best media for imparting health education. Through films, comparison and contrast between healthy and dirty living conditions, causes and spread of diseases, precautions and remedial measures against diseases and illness, social and personal hygiene can be shown very effectively.

Film-Strips

A film- is a coherent sequence of still pictures. The advantage of a film-strip is that it can be stopped on the screen as long as needed. Number of film-strips depicting various aspects of health can be prepared.

Models and Exhibits

Models and exhibits are most effective in imparting health education and convey a specific message to the pupils. The models are useful because they show the various systems of our body and the location of different parts of the body etc. This is mostly made from paper, cardboard or clay.

Cartoons

Cartoons are also effective in producing a desirable result. The symbolism of the cartoon tells its message. It is helpful in teaching health education especially the rules of hygiene.

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Conclusion

Health education is a process by which people gain knowledge and develop the confidence and skills needed for establishing good health practices. Communication in relation to health education involves different methods like correlation with other subjects, educational methods and teaching aids. The methods have been very useful in imparting the basic ideas and concepts related to health education.