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Short Communication

Health promotion initiatives: An experience of a Well Women's Clinic

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ABSTRACT

Background: Army Medical Corps provides comprehensive health care services to troops and their dependents. This approach is in consonance with the concept of Health Promoting Hospitals (HPH) initiative introduced by WHO in 1986. However, the concept is still at an infancy stage in civil health care system in India. This article describes the experiences and advantages of establishing a Well Women's Clinic (WWC) in a station of North India.

Methods: A system analysis approach was followed for analyzing input, process and output of the WWC during 2007–2009. Inputs included manpower and material i.e public health expert, non medical attendant and a nursing officer charts, poster, models, Television with Compact Disc (CD) player and CDs etc. Health promotion activities were conducted in the form of lectures, demonstrations, workshops, training, screening of movies, quiz, essay writing and declamation contests etc.

Results: Overall 385 lectures, 12 competitions, 07 training capsules were conducted. Coverage of target population was 92%. First aid training workshop trained 300 women. Six percent of the counseled women opted for tubectomy. Twelve new cases of diabetes and four new cases of hypertension were detected through screening. Seventy-two women were referred for dental treatment after a dental screening camp.

Conclusion: Establishment of WWC using HPH approach was quite cost effective.

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Introduction

The Army Medical Corps (AMC) provides comprehensive health services for the troops of the Indian Armed Forces and their dependents through its clinics and hospitals. This article shares the experience of a Well Women's Clinic (WWC) established in a station of North India.

Material & Methods

The clinic was headed by a public health specialist. She conducted various health education sessions for the clientele. An attendant registered the clients and maintained the clinic. A nurse from the local hospital visited the clinic on specified days for vaccinating the children and pregnant mothers.

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Posters on preventive aspects of communicable and non communicable diseases, pamphlets on emergent health issues, models on breast self examination and contraceptive methods were provided in the clinic. Television with Compact Disc (CD) player was a valuable asset for screening movies on preventive and promotive health care. Initially the clinic was made functional for 1 h a day (11.00 AM–12.00 PM). On popular demand from the clientele, the timings of the clinic were extended by an hour after one month of its inception. This was later increased to 2 h. Women and children of 24 military units located in the station benefitted from this unique facility. Monthly schedule of activities were circulated in advance to all the units. Telephonic message was conveyed to the unit to send women to the clinic one day in advance.

During the clinic hours, health education sessions were conducted using audio visual aids like charts and posters. Pamphlets in Hindi and English were prepared on all the health topics and were distributed to the clients during various sessions. Maternal and child health, adolescent health and oral hygiene issues were the focus of these health talks. Counseling to antenatal and postnatal cases was given on nutritional aspects, care of self and baby and breast feeding. Special sessions on peri menopausal and postmenopausal women were also held. Practical demonstrations on a wide range of subjects like Oral Rehydration Solution preparation, sponging in a case of fever, use of contraceptives, repellent use, etc were undertaken. Practical demonstration on breast self examination, as the most important tool for early detection of cancer was undertaken. Correct technique of brushing the teeth was demonstrated. The newly introduced Hepatitis B vaccine was administered to all the clientele. Movies on prevention like 'Aakhri Dastak', 'Savdhan Jawan' 'Subah Hone Tak' were screened at the clinic. The important health days like World Health Day, Breast Feeding Week, Breast Cancer Awareness Week, World Heart Day, and World Suicide Prevention Day were celebrated. Contemporary issues like prevention of swine flu evoked wide participation from the audience. Family issues like writing letters to soldier – husband in forward areas with a view to reduce his stress levels were also covered. Well baby competitions and healthy tiffin competitions evoked enthusiastic response. On client demand the scope of the clinic was extended to include, grooming courses for adolescent girls. Women attending WWC were interviewed regarding their views about the clinic to further improve the content and structure of the activities being undertaken.

Results

During the period 2007–2009 385 lectures, 12 competitions, 07 training capsules were conducted. 300 women were trained in first aid training workshop. 92% of the total women staying in the area of responsibility attended atleast one of these sessions. In cancer screening camps, out of 680 females who were examined, 2 (0.3%) cases with breast lump and 2 (0.3%) cases of cervical dysplasia were detected. Out of 200 women (with completed family size) who were counseled for planned

parenthood 12 (6%) females reported for tubectomy. 650 women were screened for cardiovascular risk factors out of which 12 (2.8%) cases of diabetes and 04 (0.93) cases of hypertension were detected. 900 women underwent oral screening out of which 72 (8%) were referred for further treatment. 25 overweight women were given nutrition and diet counseling out of which 10 (4%) reduced weight. Over 5000 individuals were given Hepatitis B vaccination. 60 girls were benefited through grooming course for girls (Table 1). After seeing the response to WWC, an additional input grant in the form of Rs 2,00,000 was given to the clinic by the army authorities.

Later, the benefits of the clinic were extended to the serving soldiers in the form of stress reduction sessions, prevention of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Role of men in family planning services, training of teams in anti adult and antilarval vector activities, impregnation of mosquito nets etc, were key areas covered. Due to equal participation of men the name of the clinic was later changed to 'Preventive Health Clinic'.

Discussion

The concept of health promotion is now being sought to be applied in all spheres of our lives.¹ This approach implies that health promotion principle can be applied in all organizations and at all levels viz., home, school, and even hospital.^{2,3} The image of the hospitals as "Ivory Towers of disease" has seen a substantial change.^{4,5} The concept was introduced in 1986 through the WHO Health Promoting Hospitals initiative (HPH).⁶ As per this approach, the hospitals are not just seen as curative centers, but also places, which actually promote healthful living. Health promotion concept can therefore be gainfully applied in hospitals.⁷ However, the HPH approach has been endorsed and adopted by only two hospitals in India.^{8,9} HPH approach was operationalized in our study area by establishing WWC. This idea was eventually integrated with the medical services provided in the station. The overall functioning and existence of clinic matched with the Army ethos of providing welfare to the troops and their dependents.

The services of the WWC helped in changing the image of hospital in the station. It supported the hospital services in town by placing greater emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention. It added a new dimension to the orthodox image of hospital as a diagnostic and curative center. Attitude of clients attending the clinic towards the curative services also improved dramatically through this approach. In most hospitals of India clinicians have a heavy workload in our out patient departments. Adoption of HPH concept will help in reducing the load of clinicians by social workers/nurses and general doctors who can share the task of counseling, health education, etc resulting in improved client satisfaction.¹⁰

Our experience of establishing a Well Women's Clinic (later rechristened as Preventive Health Clinic) in a small town of North India is also a typical demonstration of the Theory of Diffusion of Innovation.¹¹ As per this theory, initial response of a society to any innovation is of reservation and skepticism. In

Table 1 – System analysis of Well Women's Clinic.

Input	Process	Output *Remarks
<i>Manpower</i>	Cancer screening camp	2 (0.3%) cases with breast lump 2 (0.3%) cases of cervical dysplasia *680 females participated
• Public health expert	First aid training workshop	10 sessions *300 females were trained
• Nursing officer from Military Hospital for vaccination	Counseling for planned parenthood	12 (6%) females reported for tubectomy *200 females with completed family size
• Non medical attendant	Screening for cardiovascular risk factors	12 (2.8%) cases of diabetes 04 (0.93) cases of hypertension *430 females screened
<i>Material</i>	Dental camp	72 (8%) females referred for treatment *900 females screened
Chairs, table, sofa, charts, health education models, pamphlets, TV, DVD player, CDs, emergency tray for vaccination days, vaccine, black and white board for lectures, notice board, water cooler	Counseling to overweight individuals	10 (4%) reduced weight *25 obese females were counseled regularly
	Grooming course for girls	60 girls trained *2 sessions held
	Hepatitis B vaccination	5000 vaccine doses inoculated *Monthly session
<i>Money</i>	Stress management training	200 females trained
Rs 10,000 initially	Screening of movies on HIV/AIDS	600 females attended
Rs 500/- monthly		30 screenings
Rs 2,00,000 one time grant	Lectures on health education	385 lectures on various topics
	Competitions	10 competitions Healthy tiffin, letter writing, quiz competition, declamation, essay writing

initial stages early acceptors join the venture. The implementer is apprehensive and doubtful about the success of innovation. In later stages the response is tremendous. This was also witnessed in our case where after the initial slow response the attendance picked up in the WWC. Later the crowd was so huge that additional resources had to be deployed.

This model of a Preventive Health Clinic can further the cause of empowering patients. This will help them to become active partners in their own care and the empowerment process can be facilitated through training and support.¹² This in turn will lead to greater patient satisfaction, and improved health outcomes. The concept of 'patient as partner' is essential for better doctor-patient consultations. Treatment options provided by doctors in such atmosphere are more likely to be adhered to.¹³

Conclusion

Health promotion initiative through Well Women's Clinic can successfully augment health services provided by hospitals. Similar models can be replicated not only in other stations but also in any civil hospital or medical college.

Intellectual contribution of authors

Study concept: Lt Col Puja Dudeja.
Drafting & manuscript revision: Amarjeet Singh.
Statistical analysis: Lt Col Puja Dudeja.
Study supervision: Col AK Jindal, YSM.

Conflicts of interest

All authors have none to declare.

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