



U.S. Public Health Service Lt. Cmdr. Gary Brunette cleans and applies fluoride to the teeth of a young Nicaraguan boy.

Foundations of Public Health

Part I: Foundations of the Profession and Science of Public Health

WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH?

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Introduction

The life of a person who develops severe coronary artery disease after years of smoking, poor diet, and lack of physical activity might be prolonged by a dramatic and very expensive medical procedure, such as heart surgery. However, public health is about interventions that prevent disease from occurring, so the benefits tend to be less obvious. It should also be noted that prevention of disease not only prolongs life, but it also improves the quality of life. In a sense, public health is the heart disease that never developed, the epidemic that didn't happen, the outbreak of foodborne illness that never occurred, the child that would have developed asthma, but didn't. In a sense, successful public health is the sum of all the adverse health outcomes that never occurred.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, the student will be able to:

- List and describe the three core functions of public health.
- Expand on the three core functions of public health and discuss how they relate to the 10 essential functions of public health.
- Define and give examples of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention of disease.
- Discuss modern concepts of population health.
- Briefly explain how "Public Health 3.0" differs from earlier approaches to public health.
- Explain the rationale and approach of HI-5 (Health Impact in 5 Years).
- Outline the overall structure of global public health.
- Outline the overall structure of United States public health.