

Chronic Diseases: A Global Health Challenges

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Abstract

Living with chronic pain is maybe the foremost troublesome challenge that individuals can confront in their life. Chronic disease is a global challenge as one in three adults worldwide suffers from multi chronic diseases. Chronic disease does not only influence the individuals with the condition but also brings about challenges to the healthcare system and exponential financial burden on the global economy. Unlike other diseases that can be cured, chronic diseases can only be managed [1]. Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death making up to 70% of death globally and 87% of death in the United States alone [1]. There are challenges to the treatment of chronic diseases in third world countries where individuals tend to suffer from both chronic disease and infectious diseases as well. The treatment challenges include multiple medications creating exponential healthcare costs to the individual, the country, and globally [2]. Other challenges include healthcare cost; technology; social, cultural, political; demographic; economic; and health access. Those opposing the viewpoint disagree that chronic diseases have global health challenges seeing chronic diseases as more of behavioral risk and personal responsibility. The misunderstanding of chronic diseases has contributed to global neglect, especially in lower income countries. The opposition to the viewpoint (opposition) believed that most common chronic diseases affect high-income countries, but the fact is that chronic diseases may be more prevalent in high-income countries, but the death rate is higher in lower and mid- income countries [3,4]. The "opposition" argue that nothing can be done to reduce the number of cases or manage the condition. That is far from the truth, understanding chronic diseases helps to prevent them, manage them, and minimize the risk and challenges associated with them [5].

Keywords: *Chronic Disease; Non-Communicable Diseases; Global Health Challenges; Cost of Healthcare Delivery; Technical/Technology Challenges; Health Access Inequality*

Introduction

Chronic diseases (non-communicable chronic diseases (NCD)) are the driving causes of death and disability in rich nations and prevalent in low and middle-income nations. Chronic diseases include conditions such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer respiratory conditions and arthritis. Obesity has recently been added to non-communicable chronic disease conditions. Global health focuses on the health needs of people around the world including chronic diseases, considering that chronic disease is well known and globally. The world has become interconnected, the wellbeing and health issues as individual human beings is affected by global health issues [6]. This paper is a literature review of chronic diseases as a global health challenge, and the opposing view that the challenge does not exist.

Challenges of global health

The first step in understanding the global health challenges of chronic diseases is to recognize its existence. Chronic diseases affect productivity and healthcare costs and have a financial impact on both the individual and the global society.

The cost of healthcare delivery

Chronic diseases like obesity, and diabetes have a major economic effect on society, people, and families, and is the major cause of poverty and hinderance to the economic progress of any nation. The public health community has the viewpoint that society has the desire for all individuals to flourish in good health and contribute to the global society [2]. But this desire comes with a huge burden on the global economy due to the rising cost of health care, which could mean limited access and or decrease in the quality of care that individuals will receive. Those in opposition to this viewpoint argued that chronic diseases effects mostly high- income countries with availability of fund to handle their health care needs and thus NCD has no impact on global health. This is not the case as chronic diseases do impact the health, budget, and economy of the nation, and because we are all globally connected, what affects one country tends to have impact on another country [1].

Treatment challenges

The treatment challenges include multiple medications creating exponential healthcare costs to the individual, the country, and globally. Concentration of medical treatment instead of the public health approach has a global impact is the thesis argument, while the antithesis views it otherwise [2]. Those in opposition to this viewpoint thinks that those low- income countries should concentrate their treatment efforts and resources to treating infectious diseases and less in worrying about chronic diseases. Using a global public health approach in the management of chronic diseases will enhance care through prevention of disease and its complications. The venture in this approach will spare lives and bolster a vibrant economy locally, nationally, and globally [1].

Technical/technology challenges

Information technology (IT) is necessary for conveying chronic disease care. IT encompasses all forms of innovation utilized to form, store, trade, and use the information to bolster the conveyance and processes of health care. IT is too expensive, complex, lumbering to spread developing nations, subsequently creating a gap in the innovation toward global health. Remote monitoring makes management much easier and effective, especially in remote areas [6]. Individuals in poor communities of developed countries have limited access to technology and the healthcare clinics, and hospitals located in those areas lack advanced technology that could help improve the lives of patients. Technology makes access to patient care fast and efficient especially in an integrated system without which possess a challenge to the global management of chronic diseases [3].

Social, cultural, and political challenges

Greenberg, *et al.* [6] noted that social, cultural, and political issues are hurdles to the NCD prevention and there seems to be the need for public health practitioners to understand these issues for an effective execution of risk management and prevention control programs.

Some of the data presented regarding chronic diseases may be false since affluent individuals have more and easier access to health, making their data more available [6]. The statement that chronic disease is the disease of the rich may be because of biased data due to social, cultural, and political challenges. Some cultures may have less knowledge and access due to their belief system and the political climate of the area. The risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease was obtained from data that did not consider all group of individuals in the investigation or research [5].

Demographic factors challenges

Gender and ethnicity factors and their impact on the management of chronic diseases.

The challenges include bias toward global poor and toward women [7,8]. The global discussion of chronic diseases pays more attention to men than women, as women are seen mostly for their reproductive importance. There is the assumption that women have lower risk factors for chronic diseases, which limits the information obtained during physical examination and the referrals that women receive regarding prevention or management of chronic diseases [7]. Those in opposition to this viewpoint assumes that chronic diseases affect men more than women, creating bias towards women [8].

Chronic diseases

Chronic diseases are the major cause of two out of three deaths in women, so affects affect both men and women equally, which means that the denial of the demographic factor challenges puts the health of women in danger [7].

Economic challenges

There is lack of financial support for both patients and healthcare practitioners especially in the low-income countries. Individuals from poorer countries or communities have limited choice in their living condition including the food they eat and access to care. They also have limited access to health education, which becomes a challenge to global health. An assumption that chronic disease is an expensive venture for developed countries to take on in preventing and managing chronic diseases in low- and middle-income countries results in global neglect of chronic disease [3]. According to World Health Organization [WHO] [9], the cost of broadening chronic disease management is a modest to the total healthcare spending with 4% in low-income nations, 2% in lower middle-income nations, and less than 1% in upper middle-income nations. Satisfactory budgetary resources have not been devoted to the implementation of evidence-based global public health practice to the prevention and management of chronic diseases that can make a difference [2].

Health access inequality

A few nations such as Canada, Australia, France, Sweden, and Germany have progressed healthcare systems that are reasonable and accessible to all patients. Other parts of the world, particularly less affluent countries, have less developed healthcare systems, and millions of individuals lack access to care. The lack of access to healthcare contributes to millions of disabilities and death of individuals with chronic disease [10]. Those in opposition to this viewpoint argued that individuals and countries should be responsible for handling their own chronic health issues, forgetting that equitable access to care is more than important in tackling chronic disease. Without support and access, it is difficult to manage the disease which eventually become a global economic problem [10].

Behavioral risk and personal responsibility

Those in opposition to this viewpoint looks at chronic disease as a patient responsibility citing the underlying problem to come from lifestyle actions such as diet and physical inactivity [5,8,11]. Some individuals assume that chronic diseases are developed because of their unhealthy lifestyle resulting in neglect of the challenges of global health from chronic diseases. They argue that individuals should be responsible for their own health and not the problem of global health [5]. The antithesis group does not consider that there are several factors that are responsible for chronic diseases [8]. The people behavior plays a minor role in their predisposition to chronic diseases as most times they do not have a choice as to where they live or grow up which sometimes affects the kind of diet that they are exposed to [11].

Health system issue

The system includes the structure and function of healthcare organization and government impact on the system. System issues include the education and role that healthcare workers play in the prevention and management of chronic diseases [1]. Most underdeveloped countries have a health system that puts more priority on infectious disease prevention instead of chronic disease, resulting in the training of healthcare workers mostly on infectious diseases, reducing the number of providers available to manage chronic diseases.

Some individuals argue that government should stay out of their lives, which includes and is not limited to chronic disease management and prevention. This is because they do not want their taxes to go into such ventures and politicians worry about their re-election [1]. The problem is that some things require government intervention to enable the global health approach. Government has the capability to manage what industries sell, such as drinks, food, and tobacco. Including government in global public health is essential to the management of chronic diseases. Many hospitals and clinics in low- and mid-income countries lack equipment and manpower to effectively diagnose and manage chronic diseases [5].

Global health challenges solution

Global intervention is important in the improvement of health for poor individuals and poor countries, which eventually helps to curtail cost [2]. The Global management approach for a healthier society result in a decrease in healthcare cost. The integrated approach is important in that different providers may have different ideas of what they think will be best in the management of chronic disease but bringing the ideas together works in the best interest of the patient. The integrated approach is best in understanding the diseases, prevention, and management as it promotes different treatment goals and outcomes through a combination of the approaches. One approach may be functional while the other may take care of the signs and the symptoms, all work for the best outcome for the patient [10]. The integrated approach to the chronic disease management is best, especially in the underdeveloped countries where knowledge and experience of different providers can be tapped in the management of the chronic disease condition. Having a personalized or patient-centered care approach may result in quicker recovery as the patient is empowered to take charge of their own health and be a partner with providers in the care that they receive [8]. Personalized management of chronic diseases alleviates the challenges of chronic diseases to global health.

Conclusion

Chronic disease is a challenge to global health, neglecting the challenges brings about greater consequences and challenges [9]. Handling chronic diseases under global health provides a wider range of interventions that are inexpensive and cost effective, reducing the economic challenge. Understanding chronic diseases, acceptance of the challenges that it imposes to the global health and including the patient in their care plan is a great start to solving the challenges [3].

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