Promoting Health in all Policies

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Health Promotion is the art and science of helping people discover the synergies between their core passions and optimal health, enhancing their motivation to strive for optimal health, and supporting them in changing their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of learning experiences that enhance awareness, increase motivation, and build skills and, most important, through the creation of opportunities that open access to environments that make positive health practices the easiest choice.

Michael P. O'Donnell (2009) Definition of Health Promotion 2.0: Embracing Passion, Enhancing Motivation, Recognizing Dynamic Balance, and Creating Opportunities. American Journal of Health Promotion: September/October 2009, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. iv-iv

Health promotion goes beyond health care. It puts health on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the health consequences of their decisions and to accept their responsibilities for health.

Health promotion policy requires the identification of obstacles to the adoption of healthy public policies in non-health sectors, and ways of removing them. The aim must be to make the healthier choice the easier choice for policy makers as well.

Health promotion works through concrete and effective community action in setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them to achieve better health. At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities - their ownership and control of their own endeavors and destinies. (Michael P. O''Donnell)

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PROMOTING HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES?

- At first we must be clear that promoting health policies is not a matter of sharing booklets. Sadly I must admit that many people has lost the passion of inserting themselves in the risky world of taking position.
- That we must be aware of the chaotic "new world" that is around us. And we should be preparing ourselves to hit the road, again.
- A health promoter is never, ever neutral.
- And many of us, sadly has evolved in health publicists selling gadgets and stuff

The short story of "La Gringa"

Statements and global conferences

- Ottawa 1986
- Adelaine 1988
- Sundsvall 1991
- Jakarta 1997
- Mexico 2000
- Bangkog 2005

There is a need for public health to be PUBLIC again

* We walk from one statement or conference to another and this has us seated comfortably in the theory and almost removed from the action.
* We are lagging behind, in an agenda of silences disguised by speeches and declarations that in the majority of cases do not touch the grounds of reality ever.

Corporate medicine wants us to be sales clerks instead of health promoters and thats why keep us in silence.

Which are the barriers for policy making?

- Confusion between health promotion and disease attention (this is "planted" with the intention of promoting business agendas)
- Globalization of the nonsense (erectile disfunction and esthetic medicine has capture more attention than prevention, war, domestic violence, and unemployment)
- There are more financial attractiveness in the disease that in health.
- Exclusion as a policy and the perpetuity of inequality of the official health systems

* Imposing regulations to the informal systems that surface like pertinent answer to the exclusion of a marginated community, creates a state of artificial illegality and convert the protagonists of the emerging community system in criminal subjects, boosting invisibility.
* Very limited funding allocated to facilitate community empowerment process
* In many cases, we as health promoters, are not longer considered part of the team of those who practice dehumanized defensive medicine.

Successful advocacy

- A health promoter is never neutral
- Keep on moving in several fronts, and don't let the system to decipher your strategy
- Anticipate obstacles and ways to overcome them
- Re-generate power
- Take time to decipher your opponent
- Don't get stuck in the antagonist side
- Don' contaminate the advocacy process with your own agenda.

* Become an expert and be known as one of the players
* We should be the owners of the questions and procure not to be slaves of the answers
* In many of the cases silence is equal death
* Object intelligently
* Learn to hear the voices of the community.
* Be prepared to establish alliances and networking

Health promoters

Community of Caribe Rubel tzul
Guatemala