
EDITORIAL

THE NEED FOR INITIATION OF SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM IN ETHIOPIA

School Health program is imperative to provide basic health care to school population throughout the country. Such program focuses on health concerns of target population and determinants of health like sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, safe drinking water, gender and social concern. Effective implementation school health increases the efficacy of other investments in child development, ensures good current and future health, better educational outcomes and improves social equity and all the services are provided for in a cost effective manner. Of the several components of school health, the following are the core.

- Screening of general health, assessment of anemia/nutritional status, visual problems, hearing problems, dental check-up, common skin conditions, heart diseases, physical disabilities, learning disorders, behavior problems, etc.
- Treatment of common morbidities among children
- Preventive and promotive activities on common childhood problems
- Adolescent and behavioral health

The World Health Organization promotes school health programs as a strategic means to prevent important health risks among youth and to engage the education sector in efforts to change the educational, social, economic and political conditions that affect risk. The WHO emphasizes that an effective school health program can be one of the most cost effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health. Many of current and future leading causes of death, disease and disability (cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lung diseases, depression, violence, substance abuse, injuries, nutritional deficiencies, sexually transmitted diseases and helminth infections) can be significantly reduced by implementing thorough school health program.

Accordingly many countries introduced school health program by which they have brought satisfactory impact on children's health and school performance.

In Ethiopia, in the last twenty years several schools are constructed in every corner of the country giving opportunity for majority of the school age children to attend school. Additionally promotive works are done to avoid missed opportunities. As a result, nearly all of school age children are now on regular education. Several communicable, nutritional and congenital health problems are prevalent among school children. As an example, one of the studies in this issue of EJHS showed that over a quarter of school children had active trachoma. School health program help address these basic health needs of these children. The two ministries- Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health need to discuss and agree on the necessity and some basic issues. A national level guideline and implementation plan is required so that uniformity and equity is maintained. If started, the School Health Program will reach over 30,000 public and private schools covering over 25,000,000 students all over the country.

The current issue of EJHS contains seven diverse (origin and topic) original articles, three of them dealing on communicable/transmittable diseases, two dealing on newborn and child health, one on adverse drug reaction and the other on systems. Additionally, it contains a review on importance of exercise during pregnancy and three case reports discussing some rare and unusual manifestation.

I invite readers to go through them as they contain new evidence to our day to day practice.

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