A new health curriculum: social determinants of health and advocacy model

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outline for today

• social determinants of health & critical health literacy
• *Just Health Action’s* curriculum
• 2 case study examples
• success and challenges teaching the SDOH in schools
• recommendations
what are the SDOH?
case for teaching social-economic determinants of health in the secondary school setting

1. individual behavioral factors explain small proportion of disease compared to societal factors

2. individual health behavior approach - limited effect in disadvantaged pops because fails to address issues of why behaviors are adopted

3. “blame the victim” – disadvantaged blamed for illness when responsible factors are outside their control

Raphael, 2003, Health Promotion International, Vol 18, No 4
three levels of health literacy

1. functional
   - transmission of factual information (e.g. AIDS, drugs, tobacco)

2. interactive
   - develop personal skills – problem solving, communication, decision making, act independently on advice received (e.g. refusal skills)

3. critical
   - Individual’s understanding of the SDOH combined with the skills to take action at both the individual and community level (e.g. taking action on teen violence in the community)

Nutbeam, 2000, Health Promotion International, Vol 15, No 3
Just Health Action

Through a social justice lens, we teach workshops and classes that review the evidence and facilitate discussion and consensus on how individuals and communities can take action on these root causes.

- developed & taught secondary school curriculum from 2004-2008
- pedagogy: youth empowerment model
empowerment model; critical health literacy approach

extend traditional model

empowerment

praxis: action and reflection

• ecological: focus on “upstream” circumstances that affect health

• empower to improve health of entire population or sub-population (beyond individuals)

• a means to understand root causes and strategize taking action on them
JHA curriculum venues

• middle school
  – Seattle Girls School, Evergreen School, Harbor School

• high school
  – Puget Sound Early College, Everett Community College, DRCC Environmental Justice Youth Corps afterschool program

• university
  – University of Washington, Western Washington University, Antioch University

• health centers
  – Sea Mar Community Health Centers
school collaboration

- JHA and school develop theme together
- co-teach; teacher feedback
- length of program varies
  - from a 2-hour intro to a 12 week, 100 hour course
- flexible
  - integrate into health, social studies, history, government, etc.
- pre and post tests for evaluation
JHA secondary school curricular model

- part 1: teaching the SDOH
- part 2: taking action on the SDOH
Part 1: teaching the SDOH

- “what is health?”
- “health disparities”
- “causes-of-the-causes”
Part 2: taking action on the SDOH

- introduction to advocacy
- choice an SDOH topic & research
- develop & implement SDOH action

**JHA advocacy framework**

- Individual
- Service
- Activist

  Address people
  Address societal structures
Case 1: World Health and Art Activism: Puget Sound Early College

- “Running Start”
- taught in 2006 & 2007
- world health thru SDOH lens & apply art activism to an issue
Global Health & Art Activism, year 1 project

- Don’t Kill Yourself
- Making a Living
- Stop paying up to $2,462 in hidden taxes!

- Wealth inequality creates
- Health inequality

- STRESS

- Close the GAP and we will all be healthier.

The Bush tax cuts are hurting most people, except perhaps the top 10 percent. Between 1979-2003, the richest 5% saw their income go up by 78%, a bit higher than the top 10 percent.
Global Health & Art Activism, year 2
street theater

raising awareness of teen violence and teen pregnancy
• collaborating since 2004
• adding SDOH action component to preexisting “Pay It Forward” project
  – differentiating community service from activism
• school-wide action project (math, science, art, English)
example advocacy frameworks:
Seattle Girls’ School, 2007

Dear Mr. President,

the car is immoral and is causing harm to our environment all over the world.

-Yooh Silly

By: Taryn Evans

Just Health Action Advocacy Continuum

Individual

Service

Activist

Addresses people

Addresses structures

Gould, 2006
SGS: Root causes to advocacy

Land mines - root causes

Land mines – action letter to editor
Deforestation

Action: collecting donations to send to Wangari Maathai’s Green Belt Movement
student/parent reactions: challenges

- broad topic / limited time frame
- race issues
- aversion to the term “activism”
- parent’s concern about overlooking value of medical care in favor of pop health approach
Before I came here, I thought there was something wrong with those people, like why would you want to become a teenage mom when you don't even have an education or something, but I realize they don't have a choice.
student reflections

• “I came to learn that in some cases good health is not a choice.”

• “I only thought that health was about body parts but it’s not.”

Prisons and TB
teaching our model in secondary schools.... successes

- great age to teach SDOH – students enthusiastic, open-minded
- great response from health professionals, educators, public
- Preliminary evaluations are promising
teaching our model in secondary schools... *challenges*

1. lack of overarching institutional support
   - no explicit mention in NHES
2. integrating into public schools more difficult than private
3. societal belief that individual behavior change is dominant pathway to good health
teaching our model in secondary schools.... *limitations*

- easier fit in social sciences and other “non-health” courses
- exploratory curriculum development
- developing evaluation instruments to measure critical health literacy took time
- current refocus to university and health professional settings
teaching action on SDOH in secondary schools: *how to get there*

1. teach the SDOH as a part of continuing education to public health professionals
2. require SDOH courses in schools of public health
3. explicitly include SDOH in current expansion of undergraduate public health courses
thank you!

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“Be the change you want to see in the world.” MLK