

View Points

Organizing a Health Camp: Management Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Health camps or outreach clinics are the effective strategies adopted by both government and non-government organizations, associations, and societies with various interests and scope. A well-organized health camp with a concentration on the various principles of planning, coordination, collaboration, tools, and techniques will not only make the health camp successful but also aids in improving the health status of the unreached community who are often deprived of basic to advance health care facility due to different circumstances.

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INTRODUCTION

Health camp or out-reach clinic, is one of the frequently used methods of reaching the unreached from advanced health service in the developing world, where people get health consultation and along with the distribution of drugs at local level. Broadly defined, health camps (swasthya sibir) are stationary or mobile short-term medical interventions for target communities, generally lasting anywhere from a day to a week.¹

People are becoming health conscious nowadays and desiring to become healthy too. However due to lack economic level, lack of knowledge, difficult terrains and lack of proper transport, sick population cannot visit health institution for their treatment.² According to the need of public, camp venues are usually designated in the targeted place like selected rural or urban community, school, University, prison, orphanage, old age care home etc. The pattern of camp is generally non-specific termed

as general health camp but in recent years health camp are being organized in specific manner for screening targeted disease like screening of heart disease, screening of cervix, ophthalmology screening, epilepsy camp, psychiatric camp, dental camp, family planning camp etc. The importance of health camps has also got high significance in areas devastated by hurricanes, floods, disasters as well as difficult geographical location.

Health camps are the effective strategies adopted by both government and non-government organizations, associations, and societies with various interest and scope. Basically the aim and scope of a health camp includes propagation of health care facility in the given locality, promotion of health care, early screening and detection of disease, reaching the unreached community population & awareness of various diseases. Medical health camps if organized in a better way, have a huge impact for

improving health of the community. Various studies have also suggested that Medical health camps in the form of outreach clinics have proven to be more convenient than outpatients' clinics with excellent satisfaction level of the service receiver.³⁻⁵ Furthermore, conducting a health camp by any organizer needs to have concentration on various principles of coordination, collaboration and techniques to reach the unreached successfully as well as making the event fruitful.

Planning Consideration

Planning is the primary phase of conducting a health camp. This phase includes mapping out the overall aspect of health camp including venue, manpower planning, financial planning, resource allocation, logistic & transportation planning with proper planning, monitoring and supervision in between the camp.

Health camp should always be conducted during holidays or weekends so as to allow maximum number of participants in the camp. Venue should be accessible from the area where there is dense population, preferably in school, local health post, colleges where there are adequate waiting area and examination space. Organisers need to collaborate with the interested stakeholder so as to ensure adequate budget for conducting the camp. Medicine and consumable supplies can be obtained from prior request to various pharmaceutical companies.

Knowledge of Health statistics

Adequate knowledge of recent prevalence of the disease in the targeted community will be very much helpful in planning a health camp scientifically. It would also help in choosing the medicines and specialists for the camp. Eg. There will be no any significance of conducting an epilepsy camp in the area where there is very less prevalence of epilepsy or no any relevant data about epilepsy is available. Availability of proper statistics of certain disease can help in conducting periodic camp in the targeted area so as to decrease the disease prevalence rate through the camp. It can be collected through the proper government or private health authority of the area where camp is going to be conducted.

Permission from relevant authority

After having initial planning for the camp, the organizer should also seek permission from the relevant authority to conduct the camp in the desired area. The relevant authority may be a single body or multiple bodies and may include both government, community and private organisations. Depending upon the objectives and modalities of the camp, the permission granting authority ranges from Health Ministry, public health office, municipality, ward office, local committee & concerned authority of the camp venue like school, orphanage, old age care home etc. The main purpose of this step is to ensure that the organizer will conduct the camp in ethical manner providing a quality care without any profit motive and self-interest.

Camp information dissemination

Organizer should create a hype for the camp at least few days prior to the event. The camp information can be disseminated by pamphlets with catchy headlines and short sentence mentioning free medicine if applicable, loud speaker announcement in the

community, placing a camp banner in the decent visible height & broadcasting through local TV, radio and newspaper.

Camp Inauguration

Organizers should always have small opening of the camp in presence of local leaders involving mayor, police personnel, social workers, local health authority personnel. This will help addressing the local authorities commitment to improve the quality of health of the community as well as improving the current health statistics. The inauguration program should not be too long and it should not overshadow the program itself.

Multidisciplinary approach

Health camp should always be led by multidisciplinary manpower ranging from helper, health assistant to different categories of consultants. Even a specific camp should have multidisciplinary approach as those health camps in unreached area tend to have a multiple disease specific service seekers.

Technology Transfer

It is the most important aspect during the camp conduction. Technology transfer is the process of sharing the knowledge and technology related to the disease and its management from a competent health professional to the local health professionals residing in health camp area. This will allow the local health professional for early diagnosis of disease even after the camp and refer the case to the preferred treatment destination whenever needed. This allows the general capacity building of the local health professionals so as he/she can manage the patients who come for followup after the camp.

Community Participation

Local students, members of local clubs, societies, health-professionals should be encouraged to volunteer in the camp as well as to help in registration process and crowd management. It also provides them a bond of community participation and a learning opportunity. A multisectoral stake holder's participation is required from the individual level to any organizational level in the community. Unless the local leaders of the society take interest, medical camps will not be able to achieve its objective. The active participation of the community also makes a health camp more fruitful. The overall community participation also helps in making the camp harmonious.

Health promotion and awareness

Medical camps should be encouraged to provide health education to the people attending the camp. There should be volunteers in the camp who can help in health promotion of the local community and providing awareness in various types of diseases and illness prevalent in the community. This will help in sharing the preventive, promotive part of the disease so as to make them aware before the disease process starts.

Behavior and manner of volunteers

All the health volunteers involved in camp should communicate to the community people in local dialects as much as possible. They should also follow the local customs and traditions, rules

and mannerisms. The volunteers should act courteously and also guide the patients as per the patient's requirements.

Legal & Ethical Aspect

Health camp should be strictly conducted under proper ethics. The provision of unauthorized personnel treating the patient, prescribing and distributing drugs may lead to unsuccess of the health camp. There may be the lack of monitoring and supervision by competent authority in these issues but it is sole responsibility of the organizers to follow the legal and ethical aspect. The health volunteers should always be careful about the use of appropriate medicines, especially in regards to antibiotics and should refrain themselves from using third generation drugs which may cause more harm than good.

Reporting the data

The morbidity profile recorded during the camp should be submitted to the local health authority with proper recommendation and photographs if possible. Similarly the morbidity profile of the community can be disseminated by scientific publications so as to deliver it to public health personals working in improving the health status of the people in community.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Health camps carried out with prior planning and in a very

organized manner with collaboration between governmental and non-governmental health organization can be more effective and useful for the needy rural population of our country. A large number of medical health camps are being organized in our part of the world with involvement of various government and non-governmental stakeholders. There is a need of proper statistical analysis for their effectiveness. Every camp must be conducted with prior statistical analysis with post camp analysis of the morbidity in the targeted area. A system of mandatory electronic database should be implemented so that all the records can be analysed and the morbidity pattern can be addressed accordingly. Furthermore, national plan on health camp should be drafted with a defined protocol from the stage of planning to reporting with a governing body established to look after its impact, monitoring and supervisions in all the camps.

CONCLUSIONS

Health camps are effective way to of delivering public the primary health care, typically in the unreached area to achieve universal health coverage, the state should incorporate health camp in its policies and program periodically making the best use of scarce resources. This will allow conducting a camp in cost effective way with high benefit intervention as these sort of activities with specialist services is a cost-effective way to bridge the major gap in achieving universal health coverage especially in rural areas.

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