Imagining Health in Social and Cultural Context's (NURS1003) – UNIT NOTES

Models of Health: Competing or Complementary?

Biomedical model of health (biomedicine)

- conventional approach to medicine, based on the diagnosis and explanation of illness as a malfunction of the body's biological mechanisms.
- focus on treating individuals & ignores social origins of illness and its prevention

BIOMEDICAL MODEL	
Focus	• individual focus: acute treatment of ill individuals • clinical services, health education, immunization
Assumptions	• Health and illness are objective biological states • Individual responsibility for health
Key indicators of illness	• Individual pathology • Hereditary factors, sex, age • Risk-taking factors
Causes of illness	• Gene defects and micro-organisms (viruses, bacteria) • Trauma (accidents) • Behavior/lifestyle
Interventions	• Cure individuals via surgery and pharmaceuticals • Behavioural modification (non-smoking, exercise, diet) • Health education and immunisation
Goals	• Cure disease, limit disability and reduce risk factors to prevent disease in individuals
Benefits	• Addresses disease and disability in individuals
Criticisms	• Disease focus leads to lack of preventive efforts • Reductionist: ignores the complexity of health and illness • Fails to take into account social origins of health and illness • Medical opinions can reinforce victim-blaming

(Germov, 2014, p. 17)

Cartesian Dualism: is a belief that the mind and body are separate entities.
- see the body as a machine
- view disease in physical terms and ignores psychological/subjective aspects of illness
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Epidemiology

 Epidemiology: is the statistical study of patterns of disease in a population.
- originally focused on epidemics or infectious diseases (now covers non-infectious conditions, such as cancers and stroke)
- John Snow (1813-1858): forefather of epidemiology, who first proved cholera was water-borne by tracking outbreaks to a water pump in Soho.

 Epidemiological Transition: is a change in disease patterning in countries from infectious diseases to chronic "lifestyle" diseases.
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WHO's definition of HEALTH:
"A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"
- However, there is no definite meaning of health. Its meaning can be different depending on individuals, social groups and cultures.

Health inequality
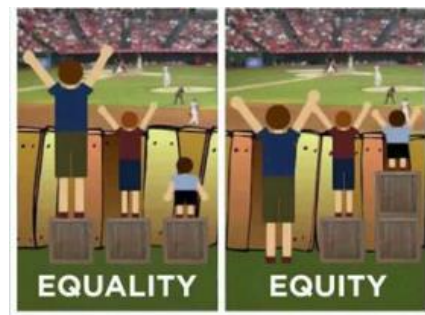Visible within countries & between countries
1. indigenous and non- indigenous Australians
2. high and low income countries

Health Equity
Equity: is fairness. The applications of the principles of justice to correct or supplement rules of law
Health equity: the absence of avoidable differences. Where possible doing what we can to alleviate inequalities to make things more fair.

• Equality and inequality are descriptive terms to refer to greater or lesser levels of access to the social determinants of health. In health equity, we move beyond description to judgement – are these differences are fair, or unfair?
• Does everyone have EQUAL OPPORTUNITY to be optimally healthy? Sometimes, people need help in order to participate equally.

EQUALITY   EQUITY

Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)
- 8 health related goals set by the UN in 2000, focused on low-income countries
- Required countries to work on the social determinants of health
- Massive progress was made (especially in HIV/AIDS, child mortality & maternal health)
- SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE = had a clear agenda, was moral rather than legal, measureable outcomes, had a united global agenda

Moving from the MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals
- From 2015, we have a new global agenda
- 17 goals for all countries
- Environmental sustainability underpins all goals
- Each goal has measurable targets

Sociological Imagination: "the vivid awareness of the relationship between private experience and the wider world"
"A sociological imagination gives us a window into various social forces and the way they influence people's lives and makes a link between personal troubles and public issues"
EG: Personal trouble = father has diabetes, resulting in stress and change in home environment (diet)
Public issue = in Australia, diabetes is said to be reaching epidemic proportions and affects both children and adults

Tool: The Sociological Imagination Template
- way to group the social determents of health
Willis (2004) suggests that the Sociological Imagination consists of 4 interrelated parts:
1.   Historical factors – how the past influences the present
2.   Cultural factors – how our culture impacts upon our lives
3.   Structural factors – how particular forms of social organisation shape our lives
4.   Critical factors – how we can improve on what exists