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HUMAN RESISTANCE - PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE
HEALTH EDUCATION TECHNIQUES TO BE APPLIED
FOR THE PROMOTION OF A
MALARIA ERADICATION PROGRAMME

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1. INTRODUCTION

Before entering into the main subject, it should be noted that the general purpose of a health education programme is the acquirement of - the public cooperation and help towards the improvement and progress of the health programmes. In the countries of low illiteracy level where the public is not aware of the primary health principles, execution of a health education programmes is the main factor for the successful health activities. This, in particular, is greatly felt in the implementation of a malaria eradication programme which is to be carried out in the villages where the educational level of the people is extremely low and their knowledge of the health programmes is almost nothing. It is certain that such villagers neither have any tendency toward the public health nor are ready to render full cooperation for the progress of these programmes. Their belief in the local traditions is still faster than in health principles. These are why the educational programme is still at its primary stages after ten years. Even not a single health centre, as an example, has yet been instituted by the people in the villages.

Certainly, the malaria eradication agents more than the health agents encounter the local opposition and the various difficulties. Installation of a sanitary latrine, erection of a shower bath, etc., are things of a visual result somehow welcomed by the villagers while it is contrary with malaria, namely:

- The execution of a malaria programme does not produce any instantaneous effect and the results thereby appear after some years,
- for those unaware of the health principles, any measure against flies, bugs and ticks which harm the villagers cattle and cause continual trouble for their families is more valuable than any action for the elimination of malaria the effect of which is gradual,
- the spraying and surveillance campaigns in the malaria eradication programme cause trouble to the villagers and due to their unawareness are regarded as useless actions,
- even, in some villages of Azerbaijan, it is believed that the blood slides are used for other purposes, and
- due to the repeated spraying in other villages it is thought that the insecticides consumed during the recent years were either decayed or false not desirably effective on the insects.

These are self-confirming points for the execution and value of the health education in the villages clearing out that the villagers acquaintance with them facilitates the work and guarantees the success as far as pertinent to such difficulties.

Although these problems have not yet hampered the malaria eradication programmes, they should, nevertheless, be carefully studied and eliminated as far as the programme progresses especially in the consolidation and maintenance phases when the cooperation from public would be a pressing need. With due consideration to these points, the human resistance against malaria eradication programmes is itemized hereunder.

2. HUMAN RESISTANCE

This, particularly in the villages where the malaria eradication programmes are to be executed, is classified as (1) resistance against spraying, and (2) resistance against surveillance.

According to the past experiences and studies, the malaria control programme at its primary stage was strongly welcomed by the peasants throughout the country so much that the frequent requests for spraying, after one or two years operations, from every spot in the country obliged the Organization to increase, in spite of all material and intellectual difficulties, the work load of spraying from 7258 villages in 1950 to 11,107 villages in 1952.

Gradually, as the malaria control grew older, some resistance against the spraying appeared from the people's side in some parts of the country. Later, the surveillance agents encountered with several problems in the villages the causes for which are outlined below.

1) Reasons for Resistance Against Spraying

(a) Insects resistance to insecticides

The quick development of resistance of some insects, especially flies, confronted the spraying programmes with difficulties in many villages. It should be admitted that the villagers' welcome during the early years of spraying was merely because it killed flies, bugs, ticks, even snakes and so on. The control of the insects to the peasants was considered more valuable than the control of malaria. This is because the people are not yet enough aware of the danger of the disease. Unfortunately, the spray-men in the past years, profited by this welcome, based the main objective of the programme on the spraying effect on the insects, instead of explaining the real aim of the work, which gradually misled the villagers. This was so much that after the development of resistance, the villagers opposition along with surprise and different rumours started and gradually reached to a serious and troublesome stage. At the present time, continuation of spraying in some parts of Iran is nothing to the villagers but waste of time. It is obvious that such happening results from the weakness of the educational programmes and their careful execution.

(b) Extra work for the villagers

This is another factor of resistance in the villages in time of spraying because the villagers will have to remove the furniture and spend some of their time to assist the spraying labourers, providing the necessary water for suspension and entertaining the labourers. This is an extra work and trouble to the villagers who do not know the result of the programme and try to avoid it as much as possible.

(c) Damages from spraying

This should not be disregarded in the creation of resistance. The unawareness of the spray-men and even the gruh-leaders of the proper spraying method and protection of the articles against insecticides caused some deaths, especially in poultry, as the forage for the bait were covered by the insecticide while spraying the houses and stables. Considering the education level and the general knowledge of the village inhabitants, this in some instances has been the cause of the human resistance against spraying the reason for which roots from the lack of proper training and education of the spraying staff.

(d) Simultaneity of spraying with agricultural season

This is another problem to be dealt with. It is not easy for the village people - while all the men and in some villages women and even the children are busy in the farms from morning till night - to leave their work and remain in the village to cooperate with the spraying men. Spraying of a house is resisted on the pretention that the house lord, or any man of the family, is not in. This may be considerably prevented through proper education and scheduling the spraying of the houses.

(e) Local customs and traditions

This is another instance of human resistance especially serious in spraying the mosques, shrines and other sacred places wherein the anopheles may rest and cause transmission in the shrines where the jsilarims sometimes shelter. Profiting logically by the religious instructions, the spraying of these places may be successfully achieved.

2) Resistance Against Surveillance

This tends toward opposition to collecting the blood slides and taking the antimalarial drugs administered. The reasons are summarized below:

(a) People's unawareness of the surveillance programme

Unfortunately, as it has already been mentioned, the village inhabitants are not fully aware of the malaria disease and its control and prevention methods. They also know nothing of the importance of collection of blood slides and the use of the antimalarial drugs. Considering that no appropriate education has been implemented by the surveillance agents or other malaria employees, and considering the rumours of using the flood films for other purposes, the complete execution of a surveillance programme and collection of the blood slides in some areas have confronted with difficulties. Utilizing a single education method (dealt with in the next chapter) will facilitate implementation of this side of the programme.

(b) Non-acquaintance of the surveillance agents with the role of education

There is no doubt that most of the surveillance agents who work in the villages are not acquainted of the proper role of education and its methods in the field of surveillance activities. It has been noticed that the agents instead of explaining simply and comprehensively the real purpose of collecting the blood smears and the advantages thereby mislead the people by absurd promises causing their later oppositions. For instance, the agents while taking the blood slide promise the villagers that they would make a list of the peasants needs and take action for their provision after returning to their office; or, while administering the antimalarial drugs, they claim that the tablets are useful for every ailment: sore eyes, root pain, etc. Thus, after sometimes when such promises do not yield any result, the villagers regard to the surveillance is reversed to opposition. The training courses for the surveillance agents when they will get knowledge on the malaria disease and the techniques on its eradication will considerably secure health education in the villages.

3. PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION TECHNIQUES TO BE APPLIED FOR THE PROMOTION OF A MALARIA ERADICATION PROGRAMME

1. Introduction

With due consideration to the above mentioned points and the success and experiences approached during the execution of the malaria eradication programme in Iran, in order to call for further cooperation from the public and other national curative, health and educational offices, the Technical Services Division (T.S.D.) for the execution of the educational programmes was organized late in 1960. It should be admitted that some health education activities were carried out by the malaria eradication staff during the past years. Since the establishment of T.S.D. and the employment of seven health educators, application of health education techniques was effectuated at the M.E.O. Headquarters and five provinces of the country. The overall principles for these activities at the village and shahrestan level are:

(a) Promotion of the general knowledge of the public with regard to the malaria disease, methods of prevention, and changes in the customs effective to the propagation of malaria.

(b) Calling for cooperation from the public for the implementation of the malaria eradication programmes throughout the country.

(c) Acquainting the people with the activities carried out in the field of malaria eradication, and those plans to be continually followed.

(d) Making close relation and cooperation with all national curative and health institutions to organize local councils in order to get public cooperation for the purpose of malaria eradication.

(e) Promoting the scientific and technical knowledge of the ME personnel.

2. Techniques

The following educational techniques are applied in the field of malaria eradication:

(a) Training of Health Educators

The Department of Environmental Health, through an agreement concluded with the Education Division of the Department of Public Health and the Plan Organization, trains eight health educators annually and assigns them to the provinces. They are the graduates from the faculties in the country.

(b) Local Customs and Traditions

The health educators, profiting by the experiences of the ME technical staff and through trips to the villages under the programme, study the living condition, tradition, and local customs. They make and carry out the proper educational programme on this basis in their respective provinces.

(c) General Information

The health educators, with the cooperation of other ME technical staff and by utilizing the audio-visual facilities such as showing films, giving conferences and distributing the papers on the malaria subject in different parts of the country, furnish the village and shahrestan people with simple general information on malaria, its propagation and its ways of prevention. This manifests the importance of malaria and the damages encountered therein as a social problem in the community which may prepare the foundation for the execution of the malaria eradication programme as a national project.

(d) Health Classes

In order to promote the technical knowledge of the staff, the T.S.D. tries to organize classes in Teheran, cooperated by I.P.M. for the chiefs of shahrestans, statisticians, microscopists and epidemiologists. This training provides qualified personnel to be assigned to the provinces. The health educators in the regions have been able to establish numerous classes in the field of malaria for the village Aids of the Community Development of the Ministry of Interior, the Fundamental Educators and Teachers of the Ministry of Education, the Housekeeping Extentioners of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Surveillance Agents. During the nine months of 1961, 19 classes attended by 833 people were organized in four provinces of the country giving the necessary information to the participants.

(e) Cooperation from other Organizations

The T.S.D. tries to establish close cooperation, through continual contacts and joint conferences, with all organizations and ministries having agents at the village level.

To this end, the representatives of all these offices were invited in the last annual conference of the Ostan chiefs of the General Department of Environmental Health held in Teheran. The results achieved were brilliant and those offices, through circulars, have instructed their agents in the provinces to participate in the malaria classes and render full cooperation to the implementation of the malaria eradication programme.

(f) Audio-Visual

In spite of all difficulties and shortage of fund, in order to propel the health education programmes in Iran, the G.D.E.H. was able last year to purchase 16 mm film projectors, a number of generators, tape-recorders, amplifiers, loudspeakers and film strip projectors. Mobile Film units were organized by fixing these materials on the Jeeps. Considering that the Jeeps do not have enough capacity for the purpose, assignment of 12 Jeep stationwagon for these units is anticipated this year. Three film strips (Malaria Disease, Malaria Parasite, Malaria Control and Spraying Methods) have been chosen, reproduced and sent to the provinces.

Actions have also been taken for the purchase of some films on the environmental health and malaria eradication.

(g) Publication

The health educators, at the headquarters and in the provinces, prepare articles to furnish the public with information on the malaria eradication activities.

In this connection, a monthly magazine, "Intra-Organization Publication of Malaria Eradication", has been prepared and published. Two pamphlets and several posters have also been prepared which are ready for press and distribution.

It is hoped that a more suitable ground be provided for the execution of the malaria eradication programme in the country through completion of the staff required in the provinces, training the new health educators and implementation of the education programmes and the techniques to be applied.