

Role of Academia in Public Health

Public health is ‘the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting human health through organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private, communities and individuals’ (Acheson 1988). This concept of public health underscores the organized and societal efforts that can contribute to establish, maintain and improve health. The landscape of health has been rapidly changing in the 21st century, with the increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases and mental health, the emergence and re-emergence of communicable diseases, the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), increasing demands from an ageing population and displaced populations, and rising health inequities. The ability of health systems to cope with these increasing challenges is limited and could not combat all these complex and diverse challenges independently, however it necessitates the role of academia in the strategies to deliver public health functions. Members of the academia, universities and colleges are considered as an element of change which can stimulate a social progress through partnership with other forces in society such as health professionals’ associations, health and community-based organizations. Academia plays three important functions within the public health system which are as follows:

- To educate and train human resource to deliver essential public health functions

The most distinctive role of academia lies in the preparation of public health professionals by devising curriculum based on current community needs and upgrading the skills of health personnel to prepare them to face emerging public health related challenges. Since public health is a multidimensional field, public health workforce needs to be educated and trained in a wide range of disciplines and in diverse academic settings, including schools of public health, nutrition, anthropology, medicine, nursing, dentistry, social work, allied health professions, pharmacy, law, public administration, veterinary medicine, engineering, environmental sciences, biology, microbiology, and journalism.

- To conduct basic and applied research in disciplines pertinent to public health

High quality research and evidence are pre-requisites to draw fresh insights to health problems, health assessment, policy development and assurance. Academic workforce is responsible to train health personnel in scientific methods to develop research proposals and conduct research by providing experiential learning.

- To engage in community, public, and professional service

Academia is also responsible to provide *community service* (service to state and local health departments, community organizations, and individuals), *policy guidance* and *service to profession* (providing peer review for professional journals, serving as officers of professional associations).

Academia is committed to work in partnership with other components of the public health system to address the current and upcoming challenges. It is critical to invest in the education, recruitment and retention of a fit-for-purpose, responsive and competent workforce. Therefore, the role of academia must be valued, and adequate funding must be

available to develop the programs which are imperative for education and training, conduct research, and services to achieve public health.

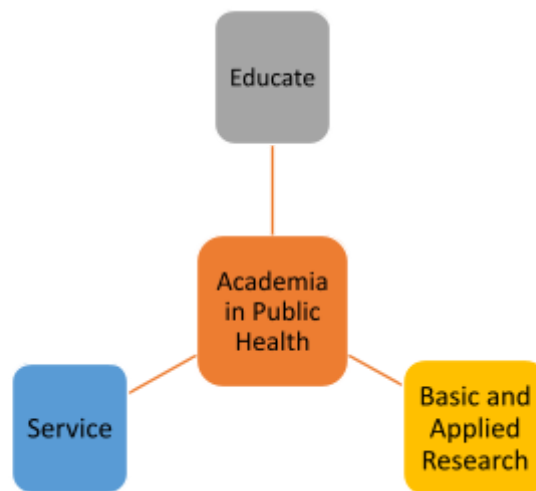


Figure 1: Triple Role of Academia in Public Health

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