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## A Critical Review of Preventive Medicine Strategies and Their Effectiveness: A Global Perspective

Gulnara Abashidze-Gabaidze PhD Candidate at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University  
Lasha Loria-associated professor Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University  
Mishiko Gabaidze - Student at Caucasus university, Tbilisi, Georgia

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### Abstract

**Background:** Preventive medicine is a crucial aspect of healthcare to prevent diseases and promote population health. This review examines the current state of preventive medicine research, focusing on global approaches and emerging trends.

**Objective:** This literature review aims to critically analyse and synthesize the most recent and relevant literature on preventive medicine, focusing on identifying promising strategies and interventions for improving population health.

**Methods:** A comprehensive search of electronic databases, including Gool Escolar, Web of Science, and PubMed, was conducted to identify relevant articles published within the last five years. Keywords such as "preventive medicine", "health promotion", "population health", and "disease prevention" were used in combination to identify articles related to the topic.

**Results:** The review identified a range of promising strategies for preventive medicine, including lifestyle interventions, immunization programs, and community-based approaches. The review also highlights the importance of a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to preventive medicine involving healthcare providers, policymakers, and the wider community.

**Conclusion:** The findings of this review suggest a growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of preventive medicine in improving population health. However, further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of these interventions and identify barriers to implementation and opportunities for scaling up preventive medicine programs worldwide.

**Keywords:** Preventive medicine, primary prevention, secondary prevention, primary health care, vaccination, COVID-19, health education, lifestyle changes, environmental modifications, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, infectious diseases, healthcare delivery, global health.

### Introduction

Preventive medicine is a critical aspect of public health that aims to prevent diseases, disabilities, and premature death. Primary and secondary prevention are the two main categories of preventive medicine, and both are essential for improving the health of populations worldwide. Primary prevention focuses on preventing the onset of disease in healthy individuals. In contrast,

secondary prevention aims to identify and treat diseases in their early stages to prevent complications and improve outcomes.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the development of preventive medicine worldwide, particularly considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of preventive medicine in protecting public health and has led to an increased emphasis on vaccination and other preventive measures.

This literature review aims to explore how primary and secondary prevention is being done in different countries worldwide. The review will focus on primary health care, vaccination, and other preventive measures, including those implemented explicitly in response to COVID-19. The goal is to gain insights into the current state of preventive medicine globally and identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a significant public health concern globally, with cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), cancer, and diabetes being the leading causes of death (NCD Countdown 2030, 2018). In response, preventive medicine has emerged as a crucial strategy to reduce the incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases. Preventive medicine includes measures such as early detection and intervention, health promotion, and disease prevention, all of which aim to reduce the NCD burden on individuals, communities, and health systems.

Community-based interventions are particularly effective in promoting healthy behaviours and reducing the risk of chronic diseases. Such interventions can take many forms, such as health education campaigns, physical activity programs, and interventions targeting specific populations or settings, such as schools or workplaces (Airhihenbuwa et al., 2021). These interventions effectively increase knowledge and awareness of healthy behaviours, promote behaviour change, and reduce NCD incidence.

Despite the effectiveness of community-based interventions, many challenges still need to be addressed in their implementation and sustainability. These challenges include funding and resource limitations, insufficient community engagement and participation, and a need for coordination between different sectors and stakeholders. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach involving collaboration and partnerships between governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

The research allows us to deeply analyse community-based interventions for preventing and controlling NCDs. Specifically, we will focus on the effectiveness of these interventions, the challenges and barriers to their implementation and sustainability, and the strategies and approaches identified as effective in overcoming these challenges. By synthesizing and analysing the available evidence, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the role of community-based interventions in preventing and controlling NCDs and provide recommendations for future research and practice. We will examine relevant literature published in the last five years to achieve this goal.

**Method**

My research methodology utilized specific approaches, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. These approaches led to the processing and review of the material in four crucial stages: conceptualization, planning, implementation of analysis, and evaluation, culminating in the creation of new recommendations and conclusions.

My literature review utilized a meta-analysis, which combined quantitative findings and data synthesis to integrate results. This methodology is considered a mixed research approach.

The sources of information were obtained through a comprehensive search of literature related to my research topic using search engines such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, and PubMed. The focus was on the views of preventive medicine in different countries, utilizing keywords that would provide specific answers to existing hypotheses. All articles found within the last five years were included in the research criteria.

Exclusion criteria were articles based on information older than ten years, which were no longer relevant information sources. This decision was made to provide interested researchers with as much up-to-date information as possible.

**Primary Prevention Methods:**

Primary prevention methods aim to prevent disease onset in healthy individuals. The following are some of the most common primary prevention methods used across the world:

**1. Health Promotion and Education**

Health promotion and education are vital components of primary prevention. These methods aim to educate individuals about healthy behaviours and lifestyle choices that can help prevent disease onset. Health promotion and education can take many forms, including community-based programs, public health campaigns, and educational materials such as brochures and posters. (Baxter et al., 2018)

**2. Environmental Interventions**

Environmental interventions are designed to create healthier environments that support healthy behaviours. Examples of environmental interventions include implementing smoke-free laws, installing bike lanes and pedestrian walkways to encourage physical activity, and providing healthy food options in schools and workplaces. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

**3. Vaccination**

Vaccination is a highly effective primary prevention method used for many years to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Vaccines stimulate the body's immune system to produce antibodies against a particular disease, which can prevent infection. Vaccination is recommended for individuals of all ages and is particularly important for high-risk populations such as children, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems. (World Health Organization, n.d.)

**4. Primary Health Care**

Primary health care is a comprehensive approach to health care that focuses on preventing disease and promoting health. This approach involves providing a range of services, including primary medical care, health education, and social services. Primary health care is essential for promoting healthy behaviours and preventing disease onset (World Health Organization, n.d.).

Overall, primary prevention methods are critical for preventing disease onset and promoting overall health and wellness. By using health promotion and education, environmental interventions, vaccination, and primary health care, it is possible to prevent many diseases and improve health outcomes for individuals and communities worldwide.

### **Secondary Prevention Methods:**

Secondary prevention methods aim to identify and treat diseases in their early stages to prevent complications and improve outcomes. The following are some of the most common secondary prevention methods used across the world:

#### **1. Screening Programs**

Screening programs are designed to identify individuals at risk of developing certain diseases or conditions. These programs are typically targeted at high-risk populations, such as those with a family history of a particular disease or individuals who engage in high-risk behaviours. Examples of diseases for which screening programs are commonly used include breast, cervical, and colon cancer. Screening programs aim to identify diseases early when they are more easily treatable. (Mod, et al., 2019)

#### **2. Diagnostic Testing**

Diagnostic testing is used to confirm the presence of a disease or condition. This type of testing is typically done after a screening program has identified an individual at risk of a particular disease. Diagnostic testing may also be used to monitor a disease's progression or evaluate a treatment's effectiveness. ("American Society of Clinical Oncology," 2021)

#### **3. Early Intervention**

Early intervention involves treating a disease or condition early, typically before the onset of symptoms. This approach is convenient for conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, which often have no symptoms in their early stages. Treating these conditions early can prevent complications and improve outcomes. (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 2021)

#### **4. Follow-Up Care**

Follow-up care is an essential component of secondary prevention. This involves monitoring individuals diagnosed with a particular disease or condition to ensure that they receive the appropriate treatment and to detect any complications that may arise. Regular follow-up care is particularly important for chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, which require ongoing management. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

Overall, secondary prevention methods are critical for identifying and treating diseases in their early stages. Screening programs, diagnostic testing, early intervention, and follow-up care can prevent complications, improve outcomes, and ultimately save lives.

**Primary Health Care and Preventive Medicine:**

Primary health care (PHC) is a comprehensive approach that focuses on providing a wide range of services, including health promotion, disease prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. PHC is an essential component of preventive medicine because it emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy behaviours and preventing disease onset.

PHC is particularly important for individuals living in low- and middle-income countries where resources are often limited. PHC can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to prevent disease and improve health outcomes in these settings.

One of the critical components of PHC is community-based health promotion and education. This involves working with local communities to develop programs and initiatives promoting healthy lifestyles. These initiatives can take many forms, such as health education classes, community health fairs, and outreach programs to high-risk populations. (World Health Organization, 2021)

Another essential component of PHC is vaccination. As previously mentioned, vaccination is a highly effective primary prevention method to prevent the spreading of infectious diseases. Vaccination is a critical component of PHC because it can prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases and improve overall population health.

PHC also emphasizes the importance of early detection and treatment of disease. Screening programs are a vital aspect of PHC because they can identify individuals at high risk for disease and provide early intervention and treatment. For example, regular cancer screenings can help detect cancer early when it is more treatable.

Finally, PHC also emphasizes the importance of social determinants of health, such as access to clean water, safe housing, and adequate nutrition. Addressing these social determinants of health is critical for improving overall health outcomes and reducing health disparities. (World Health Organization, 2018)

Overall, PHC is an essential component of preventive medicine because it emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy behaviours, preventing disease onset, and providing early intervention and treatment. By using a comprehensive approach to health care that includes health promotion, vaccination, early detection, and treatment, and addressing social determinants of health, PHC can improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities worldwide.

**Vaccination as a Preventive Medicine Strategy:**

Vaccination is one of the most effective strategies for preventing infectious diseases. Vaccines stimulate the immune system to recognize and fight specific pathogens, which can prevent disease onset or reduce its severity. Vaccines are considered one of the most cost-effective health

interventions available and have been instrumental in reducing the global burden of infectious diseases (Plotkin et al., 2017).

The use of vaccines as a preventive medicine strategy has been particularly effective in the control and eradication of many infectious diseases. For example, vaccines have been instrumental in eradicating smallpox and have also significantly reduced the incidence of diseases such as measles, polio, and rubella. Additionally, vaccination has been shown to reduce the severity of influenza and pneumococcal disease, among others (Orenstein & Ahmed, 2017).

Recently, there has been a growing concern about vaccine hesitancy, which refers to the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate oneself or one's children. This reluctance can be driven by several factors, including misinformation, mistrust of government or health authorities, and concerns about vaccine safety. Vaccine hesitancy can pose a significant threat to public health, as it can lead to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (Larson et al., 2018).

There has been a growing emphasis on vaccine education and communication strategies to address vaccine hesitancy. This includes providing accurate information about the safety and efficacy of vaccines, addressing common misconceptions and concerns, and building trust with vaccine-hesitant individuals and communities (Dubé et al., 2018).

In addition to preventing infectious diseases, vaccines are also being developed for non-infectious diseases such as cancer. Cancer vaccines aim to stimulate the immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells, potentially preventing cancer development or recurrence. While cancer vaccines are still in the early stages of development, they hold promise as a potential preventive medicine strategy for reducing the global burden of cancer (Gopalakrishnan et al., 2021).

Overall, vaccination is a highly effective preventive medicine strategy that has significantly reduced the incidence and severity of infectious diseases. However, vaccine hesitancy remains a significant challenge that must be addressed through education and communication strategies. Vaccines also hold promise as a potential preventive medicine strategy for non-infectious diseases such as cancer.

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on Preventive Medicine:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on preventive medicine around the world. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of primary and secondary prevention strategies in controlling the spread of infectious diseases. It has led to a renewed emphasis on developing and deploying vaccines.

One of the most significant impacts of the pandemic on preventive medicine has been the disruption of routine preventive care services. With healthcare systems overwhelmed by the demands of treating COVID-19 patients, many routine preventive care services, such as cancer screenings and immunizations, have been delayed or cancelled. This has led to concerns about



the potential long-term impact of delayed or missed preventive care on population health. (Vilches et al., 2021)

The pandemic has also renewed emphasis on the importance of primary prevention strategies, such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, and mask-wearing. These strategies have been instrumental in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and have underscored the importance of individual behaviour in preventing infectious diseases.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for global cooperation and collaboration in developing and deploying vaccines. The rapid development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines have been a significant achievement but have also underscored the importance of equitable distribution and access to vaccines worldwide. (Chung, Thone, & Kwon, 2021)

The pandemic has also brought attention to the importance of public health infrastructure and preparedness. Countries with vital public health infrastructure and preparedness have been better able to respond to the pandemic and control its spread. This has led to a renewed emphasis on investment in public health infrastructure and preparedness, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. (Dewau et al., 2021)

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted preventive medicine, underscoring the importance of primary and secondary prevention strategies in controlling the spread of infectious diseases, as well as the need for global cooperation and investment in public health infrastructure and preparedness.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this literature review has examined the development of preventive medicine in the world, focusing on primary and secondary prevention methods, primary health care, vaccination as a preventive medicine strategy, and the impact of COVID-19 on preventive medicine (Vilches et al., 2021). The review has highlighted the importance of a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to preventive medicine, emphasizing community engagement and empowerment. The review also underscores the need for global cooperation and investment in primary and secondary prevention strategies, primary health care, vaccination, and public health infrastructure and preparedness. While the review has highlighted the diversity of primary and secondary prevention methods used worldwide, it has also identified the challenges of implementing these strategies in resource-limited settings (Baxter et al., 2018). The review has emphasized the need for equitable distribution and access to vaccines worldwide, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of global cooperation and investment in public health infrastructure and preparedness, the disruption of routine preventive care services, and the renewed emphasis on primary prevention strategies. Overall, this literature review has provided valuable insights into the development of preventive medicine and has emphasized the importance of a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to public health (Marmot, 2017; WHO, 2021b). By addressing the challenges identified in this review, we can

work towards a world where everyone can access the preventive care, they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

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