

Benefits of the Disease Screening in Public Health

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of screening is to identify individuals in an apparently healthy population who are at higher risk of a health problem or condition. By doing so, early treatment or intervention can be offered, thereby reducing the incidence and/or mortality of the health problem or condition within the population. In recent times, there has been a growing trend in the WHO European Region toward more screening for noncommunicable diseases and health checks. However, it is essential to recognize that clear evidence of effectiveness is often lacking. Policymakers, health professionals, and the public need to be aware of the potential harm of screening, its cost, burden on the health system, and the importance of strong quality assurance. This guide aims to assist policymakers and public health leads in planning, designing, and implementing screening programs. It covers various aspects, including considerations before starting, continuing, or stopping a screening program, as well as operational, monitoring, and evaluation aspects of implementation.^[1]

Screening plays a crucial role in identifying health risks early, but it must be done thoughtfully and with a solid evidence base to maximize benefits and minimize harm.

Keywords: Disease Screening

DISCUSSION

Screening plays a crucial role in preventive medicine, aiming to identify diseases at an early and pre-symptomatic stage. Benefits of disease screening in public health might include:

- **Early Detection and Treatment:** Screening tools help identify patients early, allowing timely intervention and treatment. Early disease management is often more effective and less expensive, leading to better health outcomes. For at-risk individuals, screening can prevent disease progression and reduce symptoms.
- **Reduced Disease Burden:** By detecting diseases early, screening reduces the overall burden on both individuals and the community. It minimizes illness, disability, and mortality, contributing to a healthier population.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Cost-effectiveness analyses evaluate the value of screening tools. These analyses consider expected benefits and costs, helping assess the economic feasibility of screening programs.
- **Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs):** QALYs are commonly used as the main outcome measure in cost-effectiveness studies. They capture both health-related quality of life and life expectancy, providing a comprehensive view of the impact of screening.
- **Non-Health Benefits:** Screening can have broader societal benefits beyond health outcomes. However, consistent reporting of non-health costs and benefits remains a challenge.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Estimating the sojourn time (the interval between screening detection and symptom-based diagnosis) is critical and crucial. Accurate assessment of treatment effects and progression rates for early-identified patients is essential and required.

SUMMARY

Effective screening strategies are valuable investments for healthcare systems, promoting better health and well-being for all.^[2]

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