

**Men's Health Essay I : Mid-Term**

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I was the reason behind my grandfather finally investing in a cochlear implant. As a kid, my grandfather was my father figure. He was there to push me during the high and low times of my childhood. He would push me high on the swings, up until I could reach the top of the roof, and he would push me back onto my feet when I fell low to the ground. Night after night, he sat by my bed, reading me stories until I drifted off to sleep. I never doubted that my grandfather loved me, I could feel it in everything that he did. But as a little girl, nothing broke my heart more than knowing he couldn't hear the three most important words a child could ever say: "*I love you.*" Health is something we don't usually think about, until it is the only thing that matters. It is the quiet heartbeat that allows us to chase dreams, love deeply, and live fully. However, everyday lives are being forever changed just by illnesses that could have been prevented, understood, or treated if we only knew more. There is an importance in studying health-related topics as it promotes knowledge, prevents disease, and powers individuals to make informed decisions that lead to healthier, longer lives.

By understanding and studying health, we can not only equip one with the tools to better themselves, but also create a ripple effect that can transform communities. According to Danielle Gagnon from Southern New Hampshire University, health education can boost a communities economy by reducing healthcare spending and lost productivity due to preventable illnesses. For example, obesity and tobacco use cost the United States billions of dollars each year in healthcare costs and lost productivity. The CDC states that obesity costs the U.S. healthcare system almost \$173 billion a year, and the total economic cost of tobacco use is, overwhelmingly, more than \$600 billion in direct health care costs and lost productivity every year. However, with the help of programs designed to help members combat expensive health issues, "it can boost individuals' health and provide a strong return on investment for

communities” (Gagnon, 2024). The CDC also argues that states with strong tobacco control programs see a \$55 return on every \$1 investment. Moreover, by gaining a better understanding of health, we can reduce the annual costs that burden the healthcare system, allowing addiction control programs to see greater returns with every investment.

Moving forward, the 10 Essential Public Health Services are organized into three overarching components: assessment, policy development, and assurance, that together form the foundation for effective public health practice. Within the first component, assessment, this service involves collecting, monitoring, and analyzing information on health and factors that influence health to determine threats, patterns, and issues emerging, with a particular emphasis on disproportionately affected communities (Anon 2020). Assessment helps identify arising health concerns, determine community health needs, and provide essential data to guide decision-making. By having accurate assessment, public health efforts can ensure effectiveness and direction. The second service, policy development, is based on effective communication to properly inform, educate, and empower communities about health, factors that influence health, and how to improve it. With policy development comes immediate improvisations on health by providing a framework for coordinated efforts and resources. The last overarching component, assurance, assures an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be and maintain healthiness. Assurance guarantees that no population is left behind without the support needed for good health. By maintaining these three overarching components, together they can form a continuous cycle that helps public health systems respond to current challenges, make plans for the future, and promote health equity across all populations.

Health literacy plays a crucial role in ensuring that individuals can make accurate, appropriate decisions about their health. Health literacy can also be comprised into three components: reading and numeracy skills, critical thinking, and communication skills. The ability to not only read, but to understand medical instructions, is pivotal for one's health. BLK Assistance (2024) emphasizes how health literacy can lead to better understanding of medical conditions, treatments, and preventive measures. “Patients with high health literacy can follow medical instructions correctly and recognize the significance of adherence to prescribed treatments.” Health literacy also enables patients to ask relevant questions, share symptoms accurately, and truly know their diagnoses and treatment plans, which goes in hand with critical thinking. When one uses critical thinking, they don’t just accept the medical information at base level; with the help of health literacy, it gives them the tools to find and comprehend the health information to make sure they are taking the best and safest route to better health.

Lastly, studying health related topics is important due to its many psychological challenges, primarily in African Americans regarding mental health and stress management. In an article accomplished by Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, research suggests that the adult black community is 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems, including major depressive disorder or generalized anxiety disorder. “These sobering statistics suggest that despite efforts to reduce disparities amongst race and class, inequalities are increasing” (Vance 2019). Further research can conclude that the systemic barriers that black people face can also impact mental health. Despite the 12% population rate of black people in the U.S., the black community comprises 50% of the prison population, 40% of the homeless population, and a staggering 45% of children in foster cares are black. These factors alone can indicate that exposure to violence, incarceration, and not having a stable family can also lead to

mental illnesses in the black community. Consequently, there is still a significant stigma associated with mental health. In the black community, there is oftentimes a difficulty in expressing and acknowledging psychological difficulties. Some may say that they will be viewed as “weak,” or not taken seriously. Many black men were told growing up to keep their heads up, and that it is “feminine to cry.” Plus, the lack of cultural responsiveness from therapists has also contributed to lack of acknowledgement between stress and mental health. Luckily, with the rise of social media, improved awareness is being granted, and the development of and funding for culturally responsive mental health treatments are increasing.

As stated before, I knew my grandfather loved me. But him not being able to hear me say that triggered him. Fortunately, by my grandfather being brave enough to finally see a doctor, he was able to receive proper diagnostics and treatments. To reiterate, there is an importance in studying health related topics. Understanding health concepts helps people navigate complex medical information, advocate for those around them, and contribute to healthier environments. Ultimately, investing time in learning about health not only improves personal outcomes, but can also support the collective goal of building a more healthier, resilient world. Because in the end, knowledge isn’t just power, it’s survival. *I love you, grandpa!*

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