

UNDERSTANDING

COMMUNITY

HEALTH.



## UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY HEALTH.

### INTRODUCTION.

The editors of "Critical Health" believe that there is a serious lack of awareness of the concepts and principles involved in community health in Southern Africa. This extends from the specific health worker to community workers in other fields, to academics and research workers, and to the people of Southern Africa, in general. A paucity in the application of these community skills to the health problems of Southern Africa and an inadequacy in the present health care system is apparent. This fact is hardly surprising when one considers that there is a conspicuous absence of institutions, groups or even individuals to provide a relevant education in Community Health Care.

It is the belief of the editors that the totally inadequate present system of providing health care in South Africa will steadily worsen unless fundamental changes are introduced which will allow us to break out of this vicious cycle. Despite these limitations, it is believed that reading material can be of value to those people who are able to perceive the present failings of our health care system and who desire knowledge of alternatives. It may even have a small part to play in effecting a change in attitudes.

It is in response to this educational gap in the field of community health that this section is to be included as a regular feature in this quarterly publication. Through "Understanding Community Health", we hope to develop an awareness of the basic concepts and principles essential to the field of community health.

The aims of this series of articles are thus:

- (a) to provide:
  - (i) the community worker or potential Community worker with a starting point for reading in the field of Community Health.
  - (ii) people working in other spheres with the concepts in Community Health, which they can consider and apply in their daily tasks.
- (b) It is not hoped to provide any more than the broad concepts or principles, but through reference lists, appended to each article, an attempt shall be made to help the reader to acquire an in-depth understanding of the subject.
- (c) the practical application of the skills shall be continually shown by way of concrete Southern African examples, and by the selection of authors who have practical experience in the field.
- (d) at all times, the articles shall be pertinent to the needs and problems of Southern Africa, including as far as possible the references selected.
- (e) in addition, it is hoped to cultivate in the reader, a critical awareness towards the problems of Southern Africa, an attitude believed to be essential to adequate health care.

A draft of the topics to be covered in the programme are :-

1. Introduction - What is Community Health? including, definitions of concepts and a discussion of the relationship and differences between "Medicine in the Community" and "Community Medicine".



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2. The Political Economy of Southern Africa  
(Development and Underdevelopment)

The political economy of Health in Southern Africa.

4. Community Development.

5. Epidemiology and demography - The basic principles.

6. Disease distribution patterns in Southern Africa.

7. Health and the State  
including, South Africa at present, and  
its health legislation.

8. Design and management of Health Care Systems  
including examples from other third world  
countries.

9. Indigenous health resources, in Southern  
Africa.

10. Priorities and constraints in health care  
in South Africa.

11. Health problem-solving  
including data analysis,  
Community diagnosis,  
and the "Community Syndrome Concept" (Kark).

12. The Health Care Team.

13. Primary Health Care in Southern Africa.

14. Medical Sociology  
including customs, groups, families, and  
traditional practitioners, as they influence  
Community Health.

15. Specific, major health problems of Southern Africa - The challenges we face: including Tuberculosis, Malnutrition, Coronary Artery Disease, Alcoholism, Violence Rheumatic Heart Disease and others.

Each topic will be dealt with over one or more articles. Two articles covering diverse topics, will appear in each edition.

P.S. The editors would greatly welcome and appreciate critical responses from readers on this section, as we would for the rest of the booklet.

### TRANSKEI - A FLOURISHING HOMELAND ?

In a survey of the Tsalo area of the Transkei the following results were revealed:

36% of all children under 5 years old were found to be malnourished.

60% of these between 18 and 30 months suffered from malnutrition.

The infant mortality rate was high and poverty extreme.

The Nationalist Party may be attempting to promote the viability of its homeland policy but "the attractiveness of the independent homelands policy will inevitably be judged by blacks in terms of their own experience" (Professor J. Dugard, 1979).