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Health And The Mental

By

Chitra Ranawake
HEALTH AND THE MENTAL

(Thinking out loud - some points for consideration)

I am delighted at the report of the Director Health which shows the success of the Public Health effort on the lives of the people.

There are many regular programmes over radio each week on the Sinhala, Tamil and English Services.

Sinhala

'Ayurveda Waidya Sakachchawa' (Ayurveda discussion) - Wednesday (4th week)
'Batahira Waidya Sakachchawa' (Discussion on Western medicine) - (2nd week)
'Ayurveda Sameeksha' (Ayurveda research) - (1st, 3rd and 5th weeks)
'Savukya Seva' programme - Monday - 5.00 - 5.15 p.m. (Health Service - Department programme)
Blood donors' programme - Friday - 6.45 - 7.00 p.m. (News and requests)

Tamil

Health programme - Friday - 6.45 - 7.00 p.m.

English

Roller Coaster - Phone in for consultation of a medical specialist - Saturday - 10.00 a.m.

Further, as a result of representations made at the Seminar and the Daily Editorial Meeting (Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation) chaired by the representative; the excellent Health Department programmes done by Tusitha Malalasekera will be shifted from 4.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. - when both parents and children will be home and able to tune in.

Following on this success story, I would like to put forward some points for consideration.

(1) The Health Department dialogue is dynamic - but how deep does it go? What I mean is, more than 80% of Sri Lanka's population is rural - with low incomes, low educational standards and few if any of the basic amenities which ensure good health. Chief among them are sanitary toilet conditions and running water.

(2) It was suggested at the Seminar that a one year project be adopted by Sri Lanka which if successful could be adopted by other member countries of South East Asia. It is briefly to ensure at personal level through the 3,00,000 Health
volunteers; that every home and individual maintains a minimum level of sanitation in his toilet habits and his food habits (clean preparation of food, covering food and cleanliness in consumption).

If successful, this will help eradicate fly and mosquito-borne diseases which account for one-third of our illnesses. This in turn will improve the quality of our lives.

(3) In addition to this, I would like to suggest that the Health effort to be effective has to be continuous - especially if one is to aim towards the goal of Total Health for all by the year 2000.

In order to do this I suggest that the Health Department organises a continuous propaganda/campaign through the media in all three languages on a routine basis.

To avoid monotony, I would suggest that the propaganda campaign be divided into several themes, which could be allocated (and if necessary repeated) at a frequency to be decided by the Department itself, which is after all best aware of the objectives and priorities.

Some of the suggested themes are:

(1) Education in awareness - Health is a chain cycle of cause and effect.
(2) Mother and Child - Pregnancy; Ante Natal Care; Post Natal Care; Breast Feeding
(3) Family Planning; Sex Education at all levels and ages.
(4) Food and Nutrition - Balanced Diet - Deficiencies
(5) Cleanliness
(6) Sanitation
(7) Preventive care - Alerting the public to such dangers as AIDS, etc.
(8) Immunisation
(9) Exercise
(10) Attitudes at all ages up to old age
(11) Environment - Pollution and Protection
(12) Mental health - relaxed atmosphere - Progress reports and continuous monitoring
(13) Coping with pressures
(14) Preventive measures at home and at work to avoid catastrophes (health, man-made, other)
(15) Home remedies - unnecessary hospitalization - natural resources
(16) Regular check-ups
(17) Traditional methods - Ayurveda, Acupuncture
(18) Heart diseases/Blood pressure/Cancer - the philosophy of meditation as a recognised therapy practised in such advanced countries as Switzerland, U.S.A.
Religious and cultural attitudes (effect on mother - child - home - school - office - welfare)

Anti-smoking campaigns (including non-advertising of tobacco products)

The balanced personality - a physical and mental ideal

These are some random thoughts. I am sure if such topics are dealt with imaginatively in a carefully planned programme series the goal of total health for all in 2000 could become an accomplished reality.

(MRS) Chitra Ranawake
Deputy Director General
(Programmes)

26th September, 1985.