

## Scenario of Health Camps in Nepal

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### ABSTRACT

It has become a rising trend in Nepal to conduct health camps. This article tries to give an overview about the direction to which this aspect of community based service is going to and also points out a few pros and cons related to this. A couple of issues has also been raised like; ethical issues, lack of governing bodies and a lack of national policy, unavailability of data upon health camps and so forth. Above all, this article tries to clarify the importance of conducting health camps in a country like ours and if properly conducted this has a balanced benefit to all.

**Keywords:** health camp, community based service

### INTRODUCTION

Health Camp is a kind of health service, usually consultation; provided by a doctor, an organization or hospital away from their primary location. It is one of the frequently used methods of reaching the unreached in the developing world, where people get health consultation and sometimes along with the distribution of drugs at local level. When their services are not enough then the patients are referred to nearest hospitals or tertiary care center.

There is no proper definition of a health camp. But some literature defines it as an outreach clinic. There were four British doctors who first developed the concept of the four different models of an outreach clinic viz. shifted outpatients, replacement, consultation and liaison attachment model.<sup>1</sup> Medical Health Camp can be driven by a graduate doctor, general practitioner as well as by specialists, but sometime health professionals like nurse, health assistants do get involved when service like surgical procedure, minor investigation like ECG, blood, urine, stool collection and health education are provided. A health camp with the facilities of some investigations, minor surgical procedure with different specialist doctors; have been found to be more productive than stand-alone consultation. In our part of

the world, graduate doctors do get involved right from their internship.

Health camps are conducted in different places like rural, urban, remote, focused community, schools, colleges, universities, prisons etc. It is sometimes specific for e.g. non-communicable and chronic diseases like; Hypertension, Diabetes Mellitus and other debilitating disease like Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Psychiatric illnesses, malnutrition, Rheumatic Heart Diseases and, many a times health camps are non-specific. But in recent years, it has become more specific like health camps for screening carcinoma cervix, prolapse, eye and ear diseases, heart diseases, dermatology, cleft palate and lip, burn contractures etc.

### ORGANIZERS

Health camps are usually organized by hospitals, non-government organization (NGO), international non-government organization (INGO), societies, associations, clubs, pharmaceutical companies, individuals or any other sector of the community. There are various interests involved; some of them wish to help the needy, these kind of organization hire doctors and health professionals, buy required medicine and provide

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services in really needy places. However, for some it's like a showcase, they just want to show that they are doing something for the community, but in fact, not well planned with no measurable indicators. In and other way no matter how little is the service, it is reached to the unreached, if conducted in needy area. But many a times, health camps are organized in hospitals nearby places, partly due to availability of doctors, easy access and indirect marketing.

The involvement of popular public figures, actors, players, musicians, and writers has also been seen to maximize the impact of health camps. Similarly, organizers have to think about getting volunteers like students, members of local clubs, societies, health professionals in the camp. It also provides them a bond of community participation and a learning opportunity. The active participation of the community also makes a health camp more fruitful.

For a specialist's driven health camps organizer have to have a thorough knowledge of different medical specialist like internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology, psychiatry, cardiology, dermatology, ENT and their best use, according to the need of the community. A health camp for a specified group of population or geographic distribution can be more useful than haphazardly planned.

### HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Many a times there is minimum one doctor in a camp and the number may increase according to size and need, besides nurses and other paramedical staffs are also involved. With increasing establishment of medical college in the country, intern doctors have found to be actively involved but according to Nepal Medical Council (NMC), they are not allowed to prescribe medicine beyond their parent institute. This has not been monitored by concerned authority nor there is any policy for inclusion or exclusion of intern and their limitation in the camp. The camps which intends to sensitize larger population where health education is the main focus; then there is an important role for interns and other health professionals. By providing such opportunities intern also get acquainted with society beyond their medical college which helps them to mature their thinking, knowledge and experience, for this reason they should be allowed. Similarly, there is a lack of national policy to govern or guide health camps in Nepal.

Foreign medical doctors also get involved in health camps. Those doctors must have a license to practice medicine in NMC. But majority of them are not registered in NMC nor inform to the concerned authorities.

Sometimes it is also seen that, unauthorized health personnel have found to be prescribing drugs which is illegal and unethical. This is two different dimensions which need to be looked through legal and ethical aspects. There are various constrains for this issues like lack of national policies, inefficient governing bodies and incompetent government for appropriate monitoring and supervision of health camps in the country.

### EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness of a health camp depends on its management, motives, funding and planning. Both positive and negative results can be expected. At the end, a health camp is conducted for the benefit of the community, but today's concern is that they have to be checked, monitored and recorded. A national level survey has to be done which would give a clear picture of current scenario and would be helpful for formulating national policy.

Medical health camps if organized in a better way, plays a huge impact for improving health of the community. A study done in England marks that; Medical health camps in the form of outreach clinics has proven to be more convenient than outpatients' clinics in relation to journey times and that, patients preferred, and were more satisfied with, care in specialists' outreach clinics in general practice, in comparison with outpatients' clinics.<sup>2</sup>

A data analysis of a health camp done in the prison showed that a large pool of HCV infected prisoners were at high risk of transmitting the infection both in prison and after discharge, and of complications. After this a national strategy for Hepatitis C was proposed stating that information about hepatitis C should be provided to all new admissions to prisons.<sup>3</sup> Besides these, medical health camps can improve access to health care, reduce pressures on hospitals, shift the balance of care to community-based services or reduce health service costs.<sup>1</sup> Minor operative procedures for hydrocele, hernia, prolapse, cleft lip/palate, cataract can be done in health camps. A simple deworming can be done at an instant which has sometimes got more impact than conducting full fledged camps.<sup>4</sup> Health educations such as awareness about impact of diet and life style modification as well as the importance of health, information about hazards of smoking, tobacco chewing and alcohol and including pregnant females, importance of diet during pregnancy, lactation and childhood, pattern of diseases in a certain group of population can be given. It can bring a social awareness about active community participation and creates an opportunity for a junction between peoples of different walks of life.

Despite all these benefits, there still remains some lacking outcomes in developing countries like ours. It's very sad to know that Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia and ranks as the twelfth poorest country in the world.<sup>5</sup> But at times its position has advantages of having contribution from various countries, individuals, international organizations as well as philanthropists. In cases of health camps that end up in patients requiring major cardiac surgeries, renal replacement therapy or transplants requires more attentions in these aspects. A national planning for addressing such issues has to be there. In the other hand, Nepal has tremendous geographic diversity, that rises from less than 100 metres (328 ft) elevation in the tropical Terai to some 90 peaks over 7,000 metres (22,966 ft) including Earth's highest 8,848 metres (29,029 ft) Mount Everest or Sagarmatha and divided into terai, hill and mountaineous region.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in a country like ours, where easy access to health services is very hard, health camps or outreach clinics plays a vital role.

#### **FUTURE PERSPECTIVE**

A large number of medical health camps are being organized in Nepal. Various sectors are getting involved; therefore a proper statistical analysis has to be done for their effectiveness. A governing body should be established to look after its impact, monitoring and supervisions. There has to be a national plan, if not ready, a wider discussion has to be conducted that

could formulate a clear policy. A national data about health camps has to be established, that would provide information about the places, organization and would help to locate most needy area for future efforts.

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