

Editorial

The overall health status of the population can be improved only if the public health domain is strong, dynamic and responsive. In fact, the domain has several stakeholders or players and their concerted and coordinated actions are essential to make its activities effective and efficient. In addition, the domain activities are supported and facilitated by professionals from several technical disciplines ranging from epidemiology to health economics to social sciences. In other words, comprehensive and holistic approaches are necessary to run public health programs smoothly.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned facts, the role of public health ethics comes into play prominently. Similar to medical ethics and research ethics, which are inherent to medical professionals and research scientists respectively, public health activities are bound by public health ethics. Practicing public health ethics entails a systematic process to clarify, prioritize and justify possible courses of public health interventions based on ethical principles, values and beliefs of stakeholders together with scientific and other information (CDC). It is complex and evolving. Public health ethics centers on a triad composed of government, population and individuals. An article on public health ethics is included in this issue to stimulate our thought processes when a public health intervention is selected or for assessing it in terms of ethical perspectives not only from providers' side but also from the population at large.

Another area which needs attention is national health policy which oversees public health strategies and interventions to a significant extent. Therefore, review of national health policy from time to time is essential as epidemiological pattern of diseases and health conditions are continuously changing. It is all the more important because of rapid influx of partners and stakeholders in the field of health in the country. The specific role of these partners and stakeholders must always be monitored so that appropriate adjustment could be made in the health care delivery system, health policy and strategies for obtaining maximum benefits, efficiencies and effectiveness.

Health workforce retention is one of the major challenges currently facing the country. Ways and means should be seriously explored and sought in the context of several determining factors. Expansion of public health workforce and reinforcing curative measures had been observed. However, beneficial effects will not be significantly felt unless morale is uplifted through various means and reasonable incentives for serving staff are provided. This issue should be treated as top priority activity so that health care delivery system could perform at its peak efficiency to especially cater to the population in remote and underserved areas. An article on retention of health workforce is included in this issue to serve as a catalyst in tackling and overcoming the challenges in a step wise and phase wise manner.

“Let us further strengthen the domain of public health in the country using a holistic approach”

The editor