

A New Definition of Health

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Background: As human knowledge continually increases over time understanding of its needs has witnessed dramatic change or modification. One such concept is the definition of proper health status or health in general. By the same analogy, we are certain that the current understanding and definition of health will be soon modified, at least partially. Imam Sadjad peace be upon him (PBUH), the fourth leader of Shia Muslims, a descendant progeny of the Prophet (PBUH), has stated various aspects of health and proper health status comprehensively in the form of various supplications.

Objectives: In order to understand the different aspects of health and to define it perhaps more precisely, the sayings of Imam Sadjad about health has been studied and analyzed and a new definition of health has been presented.

Materials and Methods: The sayings of Imam Sadjad about health had been studied and analyzed by authors, hors and a new definition of health has been presented.

Results: Health is a steady and dynamic state of wellbeing characterized by thorough individualized physical, spiritual and social tranquility, while encompassing man's entity as a whole, and therefore, results in prosperity of mind, soul and body.

Conclusions: In the new proposed definition of health provided in this article, based on Imam Sadjad's supplications, we tried to emphasize and incorporate the neglected aspects (spiritual aspects and the need for it being individualized, dynamic and prosperous) in the definition of health.

Keywords: Health; Humans; Islam

1. Background

Definition of health is important for optimizing the practice of medicine. Different scholars have offered various definitions for health throughout the history. These definitions have evolved gradually through the passage of time, so that today the most practical and seemingly perfect definition is given by World Health Organization (WHO) (1). Some of the definitions provided by scholars since ancient times are as following:

1. Galen (129-199 AD): "Health is the existence of certain amounts of constituent elements of heat, cold, humidity and dryness" (2).

2. Avicenna (980 -1037 AD): "Health is a state in which the body functions properly" (2).

3. Jurjani (1339-1413 AD): "Absolute health is the state in which each organ's status is equally moderate, a moderation specific to each one" (3).

4. WHO (the present time): "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (1).

All the above definitions denote the significance of de-

fining health to human, and also explain the fact that since the concept of health has gradually evolved in the human's mind, the present definition of WHO may be imperfect to the upcoming generations. As a matter of fact, the current definition by WHO has not been modified since 1948 before a change in some aspects of the existing definition may be immanent. Some believe that, the word "complete" is ambiguous and there are considerable controversies about various aspects of health (4, 5). For example, some think that we need a more inclusive definition of health for special groups within the community (6) and others believe that the definition need to be updated in a way that is meaningful for the practice of medicine in the 21st century (7). The latter belief has resulted in a move towards providing a new definition as follows:

"Health is a dynamic state of wellbeing characterized by a physical, mental and social potential, which satisfies the demands of life commensurate with age, culture, and personal responsibility" (7). There are even scholars who

Implication for health policy/practice/research/medical education:

In the new proposed definition of health provided in this article, based on Imam Sadjad's supplications, we tried to emphasize and incorporate the neglected aspects (spiritual aspects and the need for it being individualized, dynamic and prosperous) in the definition of health.

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frankly stated that the World Health Organization needs to reconsider its definition of health. They think that a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing corresponds much more closely to happiness than to health and these two words designate distinct life experiences. This concept has resulted in providing another definition as follows: "Health is a condition of wellbeing free of disease or infirmity and a basic and universal human right" (8).

2. Objectives

In the current research, in order to understand the different aspects of health and to define it perhaps more precisely, the sayings of Imam Sadjad about health have been studied and analyzed and a new definition of health has been presented.

3. Materials and Methods

Imam Sadjad (PBUH), the fourth leader of Shia Muslims has stated various aspects of health comprehensively in the form of supplications, almost 1100 years ago, in a book called "Sahife Sadjadieh". He has used the term "afi-at", with literal translation of health, very frequently in these supplications. To understand the different aspects of health and to define it in light of these supplications, the sayings of this great scholar and religious leader about health have been studied in the original Arabic language and in the context of his time to ensure accuracy of the translations. In the next paragraph, this definition of health is provided followed by some of the supplications from which this definition has been derived (9).

4. Results

Definition of health based on the Imam Sadjad's supplications is as follows:

Health is a steady and dynamic state of wellbeing characterized by thorough individualized physical, spiritual and social tranquility, while encompassing man's entity as a whole, and therefore results in prosperity of mind, soul and body. Imam Sadjad's supplications about health (9).

- O'God, extend the blessing of health all over my body.
- Fortify me through the health.
- Honor me with the blessing of health.
- Free me from need through the blessing of health.
- Donate to me the blessing of health.
- Bestow upon me the blessing of health.
- Spread out for me the blessing of health.
- Set the health right for me, and separate me not from the blessing of health in this world and the next!
- Make me well with a health sufficient, healing, sublime, and growing.
- Oblige me through the health, security, and safety in my religion and body.

5. Discussion

Health is a multi-dimensional concept. There is a bio-medical component to health, but it exists in a setting that includes biological, personal, relational, social, and even political factors (10). Maybe, that is why this definition has evolved gradually through the passage of time. So far, the spiritual aspects of health have been ignored and the need for it being individualized, dynamic and prosperous is not emphasized enough in the definitions provided by the scholars or related health organizations. In the new proposed definition of health provided in this article, based on Imam Sadjad's supplications, we tried to emphasize and incorporate these neglected aspects of human being in the definition of health. We believe as he was a great scholar and religious leader, his valuable sayings worth considering and will help us move accurately towards defining health comprehensively.

Obviously, it is not conceivable that a proposal for new definition of health will be accepted without much debate. In fact, a widespread discussion of new concepts is needed in order to render them useful in practice (7). Accordingly, the definition provided under this article is considered as a turning point to initiate a comprehensive discussion, particularly with regards to the new aspects that have been put forward.

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