

# Healthy People 2020 and Education for Health What Are the Objectives?

Richard K. Riegelman, MD, PhD, David R. Garr, MD

**Abstract:** The Education for Health framework is designed as an educational roadmap for Healthy People 2020. It aims to connect the educational phases and suggests overall educational strategies needed to educate health professionals and the public to achieve a healthier America. The framework seeks to develop a seamless approach to prevention and population health education from Pre-K through graduate school. The framework is built on national movements in health literacy, undergraduate public health education and evidence-based thinking. It envisions a coordinated set of learning objectives divided into Pre-K through Grade 12, 2-year and 4-year colleges, and graduate education in the health professions as well as for health education for the community-at-large.

The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force, a consortium of eight health professions education associations, has developed the framework and connected the framework with new and revised educational objectives of Healthy People 2020. The Task Force envisions a decade-long process to define and implement specific learning outcomes that can be integrated across the educational continuum. Interprofessional prevention education, in which health professionals learn and practice together, is seen by the Task Force as a key method for implementation. Understanding the roles played by a range of clinical health professions is also essential to communication and understanding. Healthy People 2020 and its new and revised educational objectives provide a vehicle for promoting the discussion and experimentation that will be needed to achieve an integrated and seamless approach to education for health for the American public as well as for health professionals.

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## Introduction

Healthy People 2020 encourages the nation to step back and look at where it has been and where it needs to go to address the nation's prevention and public health priorities. It allows the country to see the big picture and connect the components. Nowhere is this more important than in the area of education and health. Traditionally, both education and health have been divided and subdivided into phases and disciplines by grade levels and by professions. Rarely has there been a look at the connections between the grades or among the professions.

The need to connect the grades and to connect the health professions was recognized in the 2004 IOM report on Health Literacy. The IOM examined the contin-

uum of education and found that “achieving health literacy in students is hindered by a lack of continuity in health education programs across the many age groups.”<sup>1</sup> A recent review of undergraduate to graduate articulation issues in Public Health Reports concluded, “In light of the recent growth in undergraduate public health education, there is potential duplication in curricula between degrees.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus there is a need for a framework that connects the curricula and connects the health professions through interprofessional prevention education. The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force, whose history and membership are described in Table 1, has put forth such a framework, which is being called Education for Health. As diagrammed in Figure 1, the Education for Health framework aims to provide an educational roadmap by outlining seamless connections between the consecutive components or phases of the educational continuum. This framework has been used to organize the articles included in this theme issue.

## Overview of the Education for Health Framework

The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force has developed the Education for Health framework on the founda-

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From the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (Riegelman), Washington DC; the Department of Family Medicine and Associate Dean for Community Medicine, Medical University of South Carolina (Garr), Charleston, South Carolina

Address correspondence to: Richard K. Riegelman, MD, PhD, 2100 West Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 800, Washington DC 20037. E-mail: sphrkr@gwumc.edu.

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**Table 1.** The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force

The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force was convened by the Association of Academic Health Centers and the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) in 2002 to implement the Healthy People 2010 Objective 1.7, which sought to “increase the proportion of schools of medicine, schools of nursing and health professional training schools whose basic curriculum for healthcare providers includes the core competencies in health promotion and disease prevention.”<sup>3</sup> The Task Force has senior organizational representatives from the following clinical health professions disciplines:

- American Association of Colleges of Nursing
- American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
- American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
- American Dental Education Association
- Association of American Medical Colleges
- Association of Physician Assistant Programs
- Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions
- National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties

In addition, the Association of Schools of Public Health, the Community Campus Partnerships for Health, and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion serve as resource groups.

Since 2003 the Task Force, which is administered by the APTR, has received grant support from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation and from the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.

tions of three movements that rapidly have gained momentum during the first decade of the 21st century: health literacy, undergraduate public health, and evidence-based thinking and practice. As displayed in [Figure 1](#), these three movements provide the intellectual basis for connecting the educational phases.

Health literacy began as an effort to ensure that those with low English literacy could fully participate in the healthcare system. Today, it is applicable to everyone who encounters the healthcare and public health systems regardless of their educational level or English fluency. Understanding the basics of human biology and prevention; how to navigate the healthcare and public health systems; and to how to advocate for oneself, one’s friends, or family benefits requires an understanding of the human body, the U.S. healthcare delivery system, and the healthcare and public health financing systems.

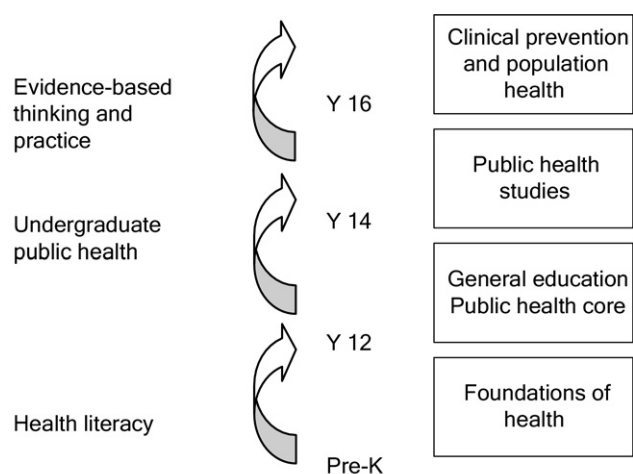
Undergraduate public health education, as described in an accompanying article in this issue, is built on the IOM recommendation that “all undergraduates should have access to education in public health.” This recommendation was based on the contention that “public health is an essential part of the training of citizens.”<sup>4</sup> The educated citizen and public health movement, a joint effort of public health and arts and sciences organizations, has actively engaged 4-year and more recently 2-year colleges in developing core curricula, integrative coursework, and service-learning in public health.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence-based thinking is now an accepted part of clinical care and rapidly is being integrated into public health as well as the thinking of educators.<sup>6</sup> Grounding the Education for Health framework in evidence-based thinking implies the need to introduce evidence-based concepts early in the educational process and coherently build on them in later years. It is key that prevention education build on prior educational content and not merely repeat and recycle basic concepts at each level of education.

Thus, the Education for Health framework seeks a coherent educational approach that employs evidence-based thinking, core public health course work, and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the biological and organizational aspect of population as well as individual health. Implementation of the Education for Health framework requires an effort to connect the educational phases, utilize experiential and community-based experiences, and increase the time and resources devoted to interprofessional prevention education and interprofessional prevention practice.

## Education for Health and Healthy People 2020

The Education for Health framework specifically aims to facilitate achievement of a series of new and revised



**Figure 1.** Education for Health framework designed to connect the educational phases to achieve Healthy People 2020 objectives

Healthy People objectives included in the Education and Community-Based Programs (ECPB) as well as the Public Health Infrastructure (PHI) Topic Areas of Healthy People 2020. These are as follows:

- ECPB-3: Increase the proportion of elementary, middle, and senior high schools that have health education goals or objectives that address the knowledge and skills articulated in the National Health Education Standards (high school, middle, elementary).
- PHI-6: Increase the proportion of 2-year colleges that offer public health or related associate degrees and/or certificate programs.
- PHI-4: Increase the proportion of 4-year colleges and universities that offer public health or related majors and/or minors.
- ECPB-12-16: Increase the inclusion of core clinical prevention and population health content in health professions education.

The aim of the Education for Health framework is to connect the educational phases and build continuity throughout the educational process while retaining specific objectives for each educational level. In addition, the framework implies a need for the health professions, both clinical and public health, to learn and to work together based on common goals and a common language.

The need for collaboration between and among the health professions also implies the need for interprofessional prevention education and practice. Thus, in addition to specific objectives for phases in the educational continuum, the Education for Health framework seeks to facilitate interprofessional prevention education and practice.

The following briefly describes the proposed Healthy People 2020 objectives, how they fit into the Education for Health framework, and where they stand in terms of baseline data. Other articles in this issue expand on each of these topics.

*Pre-K–Grade 12:* Objectives for Pre-K–Grade 12 were outlined in Healthy People 2010. Healthy People 2020 has proposed that these be continued and updated. A new developmental objective links Healthy People 2020 to the National Health Education Standards. These standards are a key building block for development of an integrated seamless set of objectives that extend into the college years and beyond. In addition to specific health objectives, graduation from high school continues to be recognized as a key objective consistent with the Healthy People 2020's focus on determinants of health. An article in this issue addresses evidence-based health promotion programs for grades Pre-K–Grade 12.

## Public Health Education in 2-Year Institutions

Associate degrees and certificate programs in public health until recently have been few and far between despite the fact that Community Colleges graduate the majority of healthcare workers. This has begun to change, as indicated in an accompanying article in this issue. Healthy People 2020 has incorporated a regular objective encouraging 2-year institutions to offer associate degree and/or certificate programs tied to public health workforce needs. The baseline data for this regular objective have been collected through support of the ASPH–CDC cooperative agreement with the collaboration of the American Association of Community Colleges.

## Public Health Education in 4-Year Institutions

A new objective encouraging 4-year colleges and universities to offer minors and/or majors in public health and related fields has been incorporated as a new regular objective. Baseline data available through a catalogue survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) are included in an article in this issue.

## Clinical Prevention and Population Health

Healthy People 2010 included Objective 1.7 that sought to increase the teaching of prevention in the basic curriculum of medical, nursing, and other health professions training schools. This objective served as the stimulus for convening the Healthy People Curriculum Task Force. Baseline and follow-up data for this objective have been collected. Objective 1.7 will be retained, updated, and moved to a new Healthy People Focus Area titled Educational and Community-Based Programs. Baseline data for this Healthy People 2020 objective are included in an accompanying article.

An implementation strategy is needed to make all this happen. Clearly this will require the engagement of a large number of individuals and organizations. Two specific implementation strategies are put forth in the final two articles of this issue: interprofessional prevention education and engaging a wide range of clinical health professions. The article on interprofessional prevention education focuses on developing, evaluating, and disseminating models for formalizing interprofessional prevention education. To facilitate the process of working together, each health profession needs to understand the roles of other health professions in the delivery of preventive services. The final article outlines health professions roles, as seen by the professions themselves, in an effort to lay the ground work for better communication and greater understanding.

## Next Steps and a Vision for Education for Health 2020

The ambitious educational objectives of Healthy People 2020 will require a decade-long coordinated effort by public health, clinical, and educational leaders from across the educational spectrum. The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force aims to help facilitate this process and build on its past accomplishments.

The mission of the Healthy People Curriculum Task Force initially focused on developing, disseminating, and implementing a common curricular framework for clinical prevention and population health education as part of the basic clinical professions degree programs. The initial framework was published in this journal in 2004<sup>7</sup> and was updated in 2009.<sup>8</sup> The success and timeliness of this effort encouraged the Task Force to extend its efforts to undergraduate public health education and interprofessional prevention education. The Task Force's successes and ongoing work in these areas are described in articles in this issue.

The Education for Health framework seeks to provide a coherent mission for the next decade and challenges the Task Force to continue to play a central role in its implementation. To begin this effort, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has funded the Task Force through the APTR–ODPHP cooperative agreement to develop web-based materials to connect the Education for Health framework with specific Healthy People 2020 educational objectives and to provide educators with resources to facilitate implementation. These materials will be available as part of the Healthy People 2020 website. Enhancements to the website during the coming years will provide case studies of successful efforts to implement the educational objectives included in Healthy People 2020.

This process of getting the word out is just the beginning of what needs to be done. Discussions and pilot programs that connect public health, clinical health professions, and educators from the Pre-K years through graduate school are a critical and often missing link in connecting the components. Stimulating these discussions and encouraging pilot efforts will be central to the future mission of the Healthy People Curriculum Task Force.

Building on existing models and approaches to interprofessional education, the Task Force aims to imple-

ment interprofessional prevention education for clinical health professionals as a key tool for achieving the goals of Education for Health. Prevention and population health provide an ideal opportunity to encourage and model interprofessional collaboration. The Task Force will seek funding to continue to further develop models for interprofessional prevention education, conduct demonstration projects, and disseminate the results.

The lead article in this theme issue features a vision for Education for Health 2020 by Dr. Howard Koh, Assistant Secretary for Health.<sup>9</sup> It provides direction for where the nation can and should head as it attempts to educate health professionals and all the community at large for a healthier America. The Healthy People Curriculum Task Force hopes and expects to play an important role in turning this vision into reality.

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Richard Riegelman is series editor and an author in the *Essential Public Health* book series published by Jones and Bartlett Learning, which includes textbooks that may be used for undergraduate public health courses.

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