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Public health challenges for universal health coverage: The way forward

Ayoade Olugbenga Taiwo

Family Health Care Organization, Nigeria

The effective functioning of any health system requires an efficient public health service. Every human being has the right to enjoy “the highest attainable standard of health,” which can be fulfilled by giving every man an affordable and equitable health system he deserves and demands. In these years, complex health changes have complicated the situation in the world. Most important gaps in the health care include an understanding of the burden of the disease and what leads to and causes ill health, the availability and use of appropriate technology in the management of disease, ill health and health systems that have an impact on service delivery. Universal health coverage (UHC) has the potential to increase economic growth, improve educational opportunities, reduce impoverishment and inequalities, and foster social cohesion. Steps taken for achieving UHC will address the public health challenges and vice versa. Universal health coverage (UHC) is the means to provide accessible and appropriate health services to all citizens without financial

hardships. India, an emerging economy with demographic window of opportunity has been facing dual burden of diseases in midst of multiple transitions. Health situation in the country despite quantum improvements in recent past has enormous challenges with urban-rural and interstate differentials. Successful national programs exist, but there is lack of ability to provide and sustain UHC. Achieving UHC require sustained mechanisms for health financing and to provide financial protection through national health packages. There is a need to ensure universal access to medicines, vaccines and emerging technologies along with development of human resources for health (HRH). Health service, management and institutional reforms are required along with enhanced focus on social determinants of health and citizen engagement. Universal health coverage UHC is the way for providing health assurance and enlarging scope of primary health care to nook and corners of the country.

e: ayoade.olugbenga1@gmail.com