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**PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES OF HEALTH EDUCATION:
THE TAIWAN ADVENTIST COLLEGE EXPERIENCE**

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Introduction

The rapid development of modern societies has witnessed vast improvement in various aspects of life. Scientific inventions with the ease of information transmission have brought improvement to the lifestyles of many people. However, while many enjoy a more luxurious lifestyle, the side effects of this comprehensive lifestyle are rather undesirable and, in many cases, detrimental. These effects are especially manifested in the deterioration of physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Lifestyle factors such as eating, drinking, lack of physical exercise, excessive stress and sleep deprivation have created a string of health problems. In addition, the feeling of insecurity, fear, worry, and other emotional stressors are working hand in hand with lifestyle factors in creating many diseases. We now call these lifestyle or affluent diseases. Statistics show that the incidence of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers, is on the rise continually (World Health Organization, 2003).

Modern medical services have helped the sufferers of lifestyle diseases to a large extent. However, it is reported that 60% of all deaths worldwide are caused by chronic diseases (Prentice & Flores, 2007). Every year most of the developed countries spend a substantial amount of money treating these diseases. Yet, it has not curbed the rise in their incidence. The questions are asked: Are there means of preventing the onset of these diseases? Are there other effective and more economical means of treating and controlling these diseases?

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that, "chronic diseases are largely preventable ... primary prevention is considered to be the most cost-effective, affordable and sustainable course of action to cope with the chronic disease epidemic worldwide" (World

Health Organization, 2003, p. 5). Obviously, the prevention of chronic diseases is most essential and most cost effective for many nations of the world. How then could an effective preventive care program be formulated?

Statement and purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to examine the principles of health promotion in the prevention of lifestyle diseases. It examines in a wider perspective, the integration of faith into the work of health promotion. On the other hand, on a student training level, this paper examines and proposes strategies through which Christian values can be instilled in the students of health promotion.

Principle 1: NEWSTART health principles

The laws of health that the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been advocating for many years have been condensed into the eight health principles called NEWSTART. This acronym is easily remembered and recalled. The health principles that are included in this acronym are:

Nutrition

Exercise

Water

Sunshine

Temperance

Air

Rest

Trust in God

An examination of Scripture shows that these laws are woven throughout the inspired writings, in particular the first two chapters of Genesis. In the creation account, God created the perfect environment for humankind to dwell. The sun, water, and fresh air represent the essential basics for human survival. The original diet mentioned in Genesis 1: 29 is considered to be the best diet that humankind has ever received. It consists of grains, nuts, seeds, and fruits. Later, vegetables (Genesis 3:18, KJV), were added to complete the original diet.

In the paradise that God prepared for our foreparents, there was beauty to capture the eye at every turn. There were plenty of good foods to enjoy. In this garden of bliss, our foreparents were told to “dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2: 15, KJV). Hence, it is not hard to see that humankind was meant to be physically active.

In the midst of the garden, God placed “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9, KJV). This was to be a test of faith and obedience to God. They were told not to eat the fruit of this tree irrespective of how enticing the fruit may have been. Adam and Eve were to practice self-control. In effect, this was the foundation of the law of temperance. We are to be governed by reason, not by feelings and emotions alone.

Upon the completion of the works of creation, the Scripture tells us that God “rested on the seventh day from all His work” (Genesis 2: 2, KJV). The Creator Himself showed us the importance of rest, both physical and spiritual. This is the weekly rest, but there is also the daily rest as exemplified by the fact that there is evening and morning in a day’s cycle. The evening hours are signaled with darkness and meant to be time to rest.

When men and women obey God by faith in keeping these laws of health, they show that they place their trust in the Creator God, and believe that He cares for the wellbeing of His creation. He loves His creation, and in particular humankind, the crowning act of creation. God

Himself initiated this faith and trust relationship by daily visiting the first couple, Adam and Eve. He communed with them in order to show them how much He loved and cared for them.

Since God is our Creator, He knows what is best for us. He has given natural laws to govern our being. He promises us that if we obey these laws, health will ensue. He says that, “if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee.” (Exodus 15: 26, KJV). On the other hand, we suffer the consequences of violating natural laws by being plagued with sickness and pain.

Principle 2: The health education work is founded upon the writings of Ellen G. White

“True medical missionary work is of heavenly origin. It was not originated by any person who lives ... and [it] has a most glorious mission to fulfill” (White, 1932, p. 24). It is very clear that God is the author or head of medical missionary work. In His mercy, He has given mankind this important work. The purpose of medical missionary work is twofold, (1) to relieve pain and suffering, and (2) to lead men and women to Christ (White, 1932; White, 1933).

Medical missionary work points people to the right way of life. Through it people are led to see the necessity of keeping the laws of health (White, 1923). Sickness often results when health laws are violated. Parallel with medical missionary work is the understanding of the importance of keeping the moral laws, which originated from the same Creator God. Thus, the way was prepared for the entrance of spiritual truth.

Jesus Christ exemplified the model of performing true medical missionary work, and He told us to continue the work which He left behind. “During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching” (White, 1905, p.19). He spent time healing the people,

removing their illnesses, and leading them to a higher realm of spiritual healing. “The Saviour made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul ... that He might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of His grace” (White, 1905, p. 20). Christ is to be our example in medical missionary work. Through the relief of physical maladies, opportunities are presented for the sharing of the gospel. It is no wonder that medical missionary work is called “the right hand of the gospel” (White, 1923, p. 219).

Ellen G. White stressed that medical missionary work is to be a means by which the gospel would find entrance into the hearts of men. She says that it is

the right hand of the gospel. It is necessary to the advancement of the cause of God. As through it men and women are led to see the importance of right habits of living, the saving power of the truth will be made known ... As the right hand of the third angel's message, God's methods of treating disease will open doors for the entrance of present truth” (White, 1948, p. 59).

In fact it is said that it “is a most effective instrument by which the ground is prepared for the sowing of the seeds of truth, and the instrument also by which the harvest is reaped. Medical missionary work is the helping hand of the gospel ministry” (White, 1908, ¶ 1).

Principle 3: Education and health complement each other

The inspired writings of Ellen White counsel that sanitariums are to be established near our schools. The purpose of this is that there was to be a harmonious blending between the educational work of the school and the healing work of the sanitarium. “That our school and our sanitarium can be near enough together that their educational work may blend” (White, 1909, ¶ 6). Each is to help the other. She further says that

an educational work should be carried on in connection with all our sanitariums. There is a close relation between the work of our schools and our sanitariums, and wherever it is practicable, there are decided advantages in having a school in close connection with a sanitarium. There would be in such an arrangement decided advantages to both lines of work (White, 1907, ¶ 7).

It is also noteworthy that one of the purposes of medical missionary work is to provide means whereby the gospel finds a way to the hearts of people. In her words,

for this reason the Lord has marked out a way by which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work. Thus a guarding influence is thrown around those who come to the sanitariums for treatment (White, 1958, p. 54).

Principle 4: The work of Taiwan Adventist College and the NEWSTART health center is committed as a corporate center to promote good health

In Taiwan, through the blessing of God, a health center incorporating the laws of health has been in place for the past nine years. It is situated on the beautiful campus of Taiwan Adventist College. The center conducts monthly lifestyle health programs based on the NEWSTART health principles. From the inception of the center, many participants of the programs have begun to enjoy better health, strength, and longevity. In addition to the prevention program, those who come with existing health problems or chronic diseases have also been helped, leaving the center with better health and a brighter outlook on life.

The center runs a 6-day and a 13-day NEWSTART health program monthly. A typical day's program begins with a morning walk around the college campus at 6:30 followed by a

sumptuous vegetarian breakfast. This is followed by a series of health lectures, including a devotional focusing on the spiritual component of health, and a cooking demonstration until noontime. In the afternoon, health guests may choose to pay a little extra to enjoy some kind of hydrotherapy treatment with a massage. In the evening, there is another health lecture to end the day's program. In between, there are counselors and a medical doctor available for consultation.

Students in Taiwan Adventist College's Health Promotion Department carry out their practicums with the lifestyle program by leading out in the exercise sessions, singing prior to the devotional or health lectures, and in administering hydrotherapy treatments and massages. Each health student is rotated to serve in these areas. This provides ample opportunities for skill refinement as well as conversing with the health guests.

Principle 5: The spiritual component in the work of health education

Included in the NEWSTART principles of health is trust in God. This principle emphasizes the fact that God is the author of all the health laws, and that He is the mighty healer of all our physical maladies. Put it in another way, we must seek Him for help in keeping the laws of health. This element of the health program is often shared during the devotional times, health lectures, and counseling sessions with the health guests. The lives of the staff working in the center provide a strong witness to the health guests.

The spiritual component of the program is as important, if not more important, than physical health. In order to preserve spiritual health, one needs to have a peaceful mind. The mind affects the body as much as the body affects the mind. In essence,

the relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. ... Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the

result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death” (White, 1905, p. 241).

The instillation of faith and trust in God, which produces positive thinking is, therefore, an essential element of a wholistic health program.

The Bible states that “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (I John 4: 18, KJV). If we have the love of God abiding in our hearts, there is no fear of anything, including sickness. This is an important dimension of mental and spiritual health. This element is absolutely essential in that it helps to fortify the mind against many unnecessary fears and stresses in life. Moreover, Jesus promised that He will give us His peace, “peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27, KJV). This peace is a different kind of peace, for it “passeth all understanding, [and it] shall keep [our] hearts and minds” (Philippians 4: 7, KJV).

Since the 1960’s, many studies have been conducted on the relationship between religion-spirituality (RS) and health. In many of these studies, results indicate that there is a positive relationship between RS and health. Though the scientific community to a large extent ignored or denied the validity of these studies, evidences abounded. Many studies later have either confirmed or magnified this positive relationship (Thoresen, Harris, & Oman, 2001).

Later studies in the United States, such as the 28-year follow-up study of Alameda County in California, showed a positive relationship between longevity and religiosity (namely church attendance). In the same study, they also found that frequent churchgoers were less likely to be involved in health destroying behaviors such as smoking and drinking (McCullough, 2001).

Principle 6: The training of health workers

Taiwan Adventist College has a unique undergraduate health education program. The aim of the program is three fold: (1) to train workers to work in the NEWSTART health center, (2) to train workers to work on community health projects, and (3) to train workers to be health evangelists working under the church umbrella. While these may be possible areas of work, they are by no means the only ones. There are many other work opportunities available for the graduates of this program.

The curriculum of the health emphasis includes 38 units in general studies, 18 units in religious studies, 54 units in major health studies, and 18 units in a minor. The general studies courses are similar to those offered in other universities and colleges, and include English, Chinese, Anatomy and Physiology, College Writing, and some courses that are unique to Seventh-day Adventist education such as the Philosophy of Work, Principles of Health, and Principles of Christian Education. The religious courses provide a wide coverage on the fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, backgrounds of both the Old and New Testaments, life and teachings of Jesus, and other Bible topics.

Among the health courses offered are Principles of Health Education, Community Health Programs, Health Counseling, Natural Remedies, Massage, Hydrotherapy, Introduction to Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition, Nutrition Assessment, Lifestyle Diseases, Mechanisms of Health and Disease, and Health Evangelism. Besides these courses, each student is required to complete thirty hours of practicum each semester at the lifestyle center. In addition, from time to time, students are required to serve in an assigned community for the purpose of making home visits, to administer simple natural remedy treatments, and to give some health counseling.

With these golden opportunities, one may ask the following: How do our students converse with the health guests? What influence do they have on them? This leads us back to the educational work of our college. Are our students well equipped to serve? Do they possess the meekness and humility of our Lord Jesus? Are they representing Christ in their words, behavior, and even in their appearance? How can we help our students to possess and reflect Christian virtues?

Strategies for instilling Christian values to the students of Health Promotion:

The ultimate goal of the health and medical missionary work is to share the gospel with others. This work is, in fact, a service rendered to those who have a particular health need. In view of the importance of this work, it is necessary for the students of health promotion to be familiar with relevant Christian values. Moreover, when these values are being internalized, it will not be hard for them to share these values with others.

Suggested below are strategies that can be adopted by the college and in particular the health promotion department, for instilling Christian values in the students of health promotion. Some of these strategies are applicable to all college students, while the others apply specifically to the students of health promotion.

Strategies applicable to all students

1. Religious courses

The religious courses being taught at the college all have the common goal of leading the students to an understanding of God. Through a right understanding of God, they are led to appreciate Him, His works, and His relentless love for humanity. Because of His love for us, He was willing to give us His only Son, that through Him our sins can be forgiven, and once again

we can be restored back to His image. An appreciation of God's great love for us leads us, to respond by obeying His word, which includes keeping the moral and health laws.

Important as they are, these courses shouldn't be taught just as any other science or art subjects. The mere delivery of Biblical facts does not change hearts. Bible teachers can be powerful instruments in transmitting true Christian values if they have first tasted divine grace themselves. The results of this personal experience will be manifested in their words, actions, and associations with the students. It will not be hard for their students to emulate their godly examples. With this, Biblical truths can be lived out and appreciated.

2. Other courses of study

How can teachers of health subjects instill Christian values in their students? I suggest that Christian values can be transmitted in the various courses of study. For instance, the teacher of Anatomy and Physiology can lead students to appreciate God in the wonderful creation of the body. Taking a course in nutrition, the teacher can freely talk about the efficacy of the original diet and its effects on health. In short, if we are careful, we can always find ways of sharing God with students. However, these ideas may not come spontaneously to the teacher. He/she will have to think it through and develop ways to adequately present the connection between their subjects and spiritual matters.

3. Corporate worship sessions

Corporate worship brings together the body of believers and non-believers in an attitude of worshipping the Creator God. These are occasions for sharing Biblical truths as well as personal experiences with God. They serve to strengthen and build one another's faith.

Corporate worship sessions should be made as interesting as possible. We must remember that college students can be easily bored with the mere delivery of Biblical facts and historical accounts. Worship themes can be directed toward things that are more appealing to students and that would help them see that worshipping God is enjoyable and inspiring. Our program wants to cultivate their interest in attending corporate worship sessions instead of making it a strict obligation.

4. By precept and example

It is a fact that students tend to emulate their teachers. In fact, students are more impressed by what they see than what is being taught. This is an effective method of forming new behaviors (Ormrod, 1999). It is not surprising that many students make one or more of their teachers as their models in life. Hence, it is essential for teachers to practice what they teach. For instance, if a health teacher teaches the efficacy of a vegetarian diet in promoting health, and he/she is also a vegetarian, the students will more likely believe what is being taught. Similarly, health teachers who exemplify the virtue of serving health guests with the spirit of humility and love help students to catch on to the same spirit.

Teachers living a Christ-like life have a greater impact in transmitting Christian values to students than only classroom instruction. Teachers should pay particular attention to their words, dress, and lifestyle habits. Teachers need to ask themselves, "Are my words and actions in harmony with Biblical teaching?" Close self-examination is one way to change negative behaviors and encourage positive ones. Teachers can be either a positive motivating force or a negative one. They can become a stumbling block to their students. It is not surprising that students observe and comment about their teachers.

On the other hand, students themselves are encouraged to be role models for others (their peers, health guests, church members, and the people in the community). One way to do this is for the students to keep a record of positive behavioral changes, such as eating healthfully, doing regular exercise, having regular devotional times, and speaking kind words to others. A buddy system in which two students encourage each other to make positive behavioral changes, will help. Perhaps at the end of the semester, incentives or rewards in the form of small gifts and for good behavior performance bonus points can be given to those who have scored high in specified areas during the semester.

When these new behaviors are adopted, they gradually become internalized. The outcome is that sharing good health practices and Christian values will eventually become spontaneous, requiring no greater effort in expression than a natural outflow of the right behavior. In this way, the health students are influencing others without themselves realizing it.

5. Personal devotional times

This aspect of Christian living is as vital to the spiritual nourishment of a Christian as the basic essentials (such as air and water) are to the physical. These are times where an individual makes face to face encounters with God and His Word. God in turn speak to us through the Holy Spirit. The quiet moments spent in meditation of His Word and acts will generate a greater appreciation for His goodness and love for us. This serves to strengthen a person's faith and trust in God, thus, enhancing our personal relationship with God.

As teachers, we need to encourage our students to have daily personal devotional times. Where possible, encourage the scheduling of this event in the morning. It is more than just developing a new habit in life. This experience in the things of God will have a great and lasting impact in their lives. Consequently, Christian values would become internalized.

Strategies applicable specifically to the students of Health Promotion

1. Health-related missionary trips

Once or twice a year, plan medical missionary trip/s to some rural areas where basic health services are needed. In this kind of trip/s, both faculty and students spend a few days to weeks in the environment of the people and mingle with them. They can help these people in attending to their basic health needs like measuring vital signs and giving appropriate health counseling. Often opportunities will arise where they may share their faith.

This kind of exposures serves several purposes. It helps students realize that there are many needy people, enabling the students to value what they have and to share their blessings with others. It creates compassion to help these less fortunate people, thus forming a greater circle of love for humanity. In addition, this kind of trip in reality helps the students experience a Christ-centered experience in mission. The Scripture tells us that “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35, KJV). In essence, medical missionary work is not confined to working in established places, waiting for opportunities to serve. Instead, we go to where people are and try to meet their needs.

2. Community health programs

Regular or periodic health programs held in the communities serve to provide exposure for students to work with the people in these communities. Activities include the setting up of a booth at the weekly night market nearby, for blood pressures checking and health counseling, conducting cooking classes, and for giving health lectures are among some of the community health programs that could be carried out and experienced by the health major students. These activities provide contact points between the students and the community at large. These

activities are service-oriented, and are provided free of charge to the people in the community. Besides the educational component of these programs, students may use these opportunities for distributing spiritual pamphlets. When occasions arise, they may even talk about spiritual matters or pray for those who have particular health or emotional needs.

Another important health related activity is to organize an at least once a year health emphasis week for the college community. Both teachers and students of the Health Promotion Department may plan a series of health programs for the entire faculty, staff, and students. This would help to foster a better understanding of the health component of the church. We find this to be essential because some of the staff and faculty members are not very familiar with our health message. In addition, it would help to build a better relationship between the Health Promotion Department and the other departments of the college.

3. Participation in evangelism

Encourage health students to work with the students from the Theology Department. Where possible, this should include planning and implementing evangelistic campaigns. The part that health students would play include performing health assessments, health counseling for attendants, delivering health lectures, and other health related activities.

The health component of these campaigns serves as an opening door to help break down prejudices against the preaching of the Word. In fact, some people come to the meetings simply because of the health services they would receive. As the students witness the effects of the evangelism effort, they will discover that they have played an essential part in leading someone to Christ. In order to achieve this goal, teachers of both the Health and the Theology Departments must work closely together in planning for such activities. A close-knit working relationship between the teachers would help foster a good working relationship among the

students of these two departments. Consequently, a harmonious team comprising the Health and the Theology personnel would be a powerful tool in reaching others with the gospel of salvation.

4. Internship at other Seventh-day Adventist institutions

Health students may be assigned to have their internship at the Taiwan Adventist Hospital, Taiwan Adventist publishing house (in the health literature department), and/or the local Adventist Community Health Center. By so doing, they would be exposed to actual working environments.

Carrying out internships at church-operated institutions has the advantage of acquainting students with the requirements of these institutions. This helps students to further prepare themselves to serve the church in these capacities. Hence, there is a need to foster cooperation between the leaders and staff of these institutions and the teachers of the health department. The internship details, goals, and objectives must be developed for maximum impact on intern experience.

5. The reading of specific books

It is suggested that students of the health major be required to read books that are meaningful to them and their future work. There is an array of books on health and medical missionary work written by Ellen White. Titles like *The Ministry of Healing*, *Counsels on Diet and Food*, *Medical Ministry*, and *Temperance* expound the health principles that we as Adventists practice. They provide instruction, mission, and commitment to the health and medical ministry. It is proposed that all health students be required to read these books either as part of their course requirements or as co-curricular activity. An interest in reading these books needs to be created in order to increase their meaningfulness. One way to do this is perhaps to

point out to them the practicality of the contents of these books, aided by real life experiences. For instance, point out that a particular person or persons' health had improved through adopting a vegetarian diet which White talks so much about in the *The Ministry of Healing* and in *Counsels on Diet and Health*. As the students read these books, they will gain greater insights into the health practices and may perhaps be inspired to pursue medical missionary work. It is believed that the reading of these books, guided by Holy Spirit, will do much to inspire the students.

6. Social activities

Planned social activities like small group meetings for social or recreational purposes are good occasions for an informal sharing of faith and values. When these kinds of meetings are held in an inviting environment such as a park, it provides the setting for sharing God through nature. In addition, it helps to strengthen the relationships among teachers and students.

Small group meetings between the teachers and the students of health promotion are encouraged. These meetings should be on a weekly basis. During these meetings, portions from the above-mentioned books or from the Bible could be read and discussed. Devote a portion of the time for prayer. Pray specifically for the health guests attending the NEWSTART programs and other matters related to the Health Promotion Department.

7. Prayer

Encourage the health students to pray often. Help them see the importance of prayer before the beginning of each program or activity and pray with the health guests (if they do not object) before administering any natural remedy treatments. This helps direct the minds of the health guests to God, the Great Physician. The same can be done during the community health

programs. We need not apologize about offering public prayer during these programs. Instead, many among the public will feel the difference of our program in that we always seek the Lord's guidance in our programs.

Conclusion

Modern living, while creating comfort and ease for many, has also generated undesirable effects in the form of chronic stress-related diseases. As members of the great web of humanity, the Health Promotion Department of a Seventh-day Adventist college has much to contribute toward assisting people in preventing and helping those with these diseases. The channels in which the students of this department can play are related to working with the health guests in the NEWSTART lifestyle programs, planning and implementing health programs in the various communities, and working in partnership with the church's gospel evangelism team.

Seeing the important roles that these students perform in these various aspects of the health and gospel ministry, they need to be grounded with appropriate Christian values before they enter the workforce. Various strategies have been suggested to instill these values to the students. With the culmination of knowledge in Christian values and a personal experience, it is hoped that these values be transmitted to the people whom the students serve both now and in the future. However, these suggestions can be viable and successful only through unceasing prayers and the assistance of the Holy Spirit working on behalf of the faculty, staff, and the students.

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