

## Medical Anthropology (2)

### What is health?

\* WHO concept "complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", with "the capability to function in the face of changing circumstances" / "highest possible level of health" allows people to participate in social life and work productively -- many critics and discussion

\* Biomedical measures -- life expectancy, span of healthy life, health behaviors, reserve health, social support, overall birth rate, population growth rate, ...

\* Critical medical anthropology concepts: Emphasizing the importance of access to resources (material/non-material), necessary for sustaining life at high level of satisfaction. Analyzing societal factors that affect the distribution of health resources and threats to health

\* Public health concepts: (cf. "Healthy Communities 2000: Model Standards", APHA 1991) Emphasizing "community involvement" as key to health concept. Healthy communities have health institutions to incorporate community involvement from planning through implementation and evaluation, which facilitates incorporation of diversified cultural perspectives on health and health services. Treatment, prevention (incl. immunization) and care availability are to be measured.

\* Cultural and organizational concepts: Health care revolution in US promoted by HMOs (Health Maintenance Organizations) since 1980s, required an expansion of health concept from "absence of disease" to views reflecting culturally valued functional abilities and conceptions of well-being. Measures examined by anthropologists are, (1) determining the culturally based conceptions of what constitutes quality care, (2) creating organizational change in health institutions to promote culturally responsive care, and so on. Cultural health concepts include, (1) concepts of desirable physical abilities, (2) views of ideal, normal, and problematic bodily conditions, (3) preferred psychological dynamics, emotional states, and social relations, (4) illness concepts and perceptions of symptoms, (5) spiritual or metaphysical conditions and relations.

\* Personal concepts to improve health: Health differs by person, and by communities. "Health is not merely the absence of disease or distress; it is also a positive state of physical, emotional, mental, personal, and spiritual well-being and a balance with nature and the social world." (Winkelman M, 2009, pp.18) => Health as a relationship between the individual and environment

\* Systems approach to health: including biopsychosocial model (A corrective to the biomedical focus on disease as basically a physiological condition, provided by Engel, 1977, 1980: Health as related to both natural and cultural environments), cultural systems model (Culture provides the core conceptual framework to understand all human behavior: Important corrective to the prevalent view that biology determines health, behavior, and intergroup differences).

- Theme for 24 April is "Should the WHO's definition of health include spiritual health? Should the present definition be basically kept?" considering the discussion about the inclusion of spiritual health and its denial by the disagreement from religious aspects. "Yes" side vs "No" side.
- see, <http://article.sapub.org/pdf/10.5923.j.ijas.20120206.03.pdf> and Awofeso's short paper in [http://www.who.int/bulletin/bulletin\\_board/83/ustun11051/en/](http://www.who.int/bulletin/bulletin_board/83/ustun11051/en/)