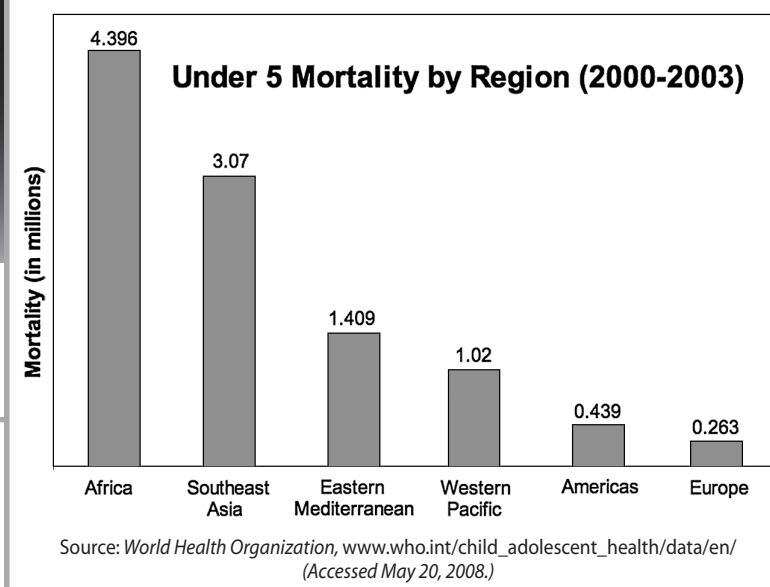


Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions

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Join us on Wednesdays and Fridays for Skills for Everyday Living, a series that goes beyond the classroom to prepare students for the many challenges of the real world. Our current topic is **Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions**, developed by *Facing the Future*. Series ends June 13.



“He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.”

– Arabian proverb

A Global Checkup

Being healthy is something that everyone around the world cares about. Without good health, other aspects of a good quality of life — sufficient income, a good education and time spent with friends and family — are worth little. What current articles about health can you find in today’s newspaper?

Advances in medicine in the past 50 years have meant that more people around the world are surviving past childhood and the average life span is increasing. In fact, this has been one of the major reasons for population growth during the past 50 years. Yet many people struggle to meet the most basic human needs of food, water, shelter and personal safety.

Life expectancy (the number of years a newborn is expected to live) is significantly lower in the world’s poorer countries than it is in wealthier countries. Within wealthier countries there are also groups of people who have lower life expectancy. It is the women and children, especially in poorer countries, who suffer from illness and disease. Insufficient food and lack of clean drinking water are the main problems contributing to illness and disease.

Basic Need #1: Water

Lack of water can be fatal to those suffering from illnesses such as diarrhea, which causes people to become dehydrated. Consider these statistics from WaterPartners International:

- Approximately one in six people do not have access to safe drinking water
- Water-related diseases are the leading cause of death for children under the age of five

- 1.8 million children die each year from diarrhea

One organization working to improve health around the world is Partners in Health. Dr. Paul Farmer is one of the founders of Partners in Health. As a young man, Farmer traveled to Haiti to cure people living with tuberculosis (TB), a deadly but treatable infection of the lungs. In Haiti, he soon found that providing medicine was not enough — his patients needed food, clean water and access to health providers.

In one Haitian community, Dr. Farmer witnessed people climbing down a steep hillside to get their water from a reservoir of dirty, nonmoving water. Many people in the village were suffering from diarrhea; the foul water was making them sick. After learning this, a group of engineers devised a system to carry water to the village by pipes from a nearby river. This resulted in an immediate decrease in infant deaths.

Basic Need #2: Food

More than 30 percent of all childhood deaths are caused by malnutrition, according to a report from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Aga Khan University in Pakistan. This is largely a problem for poor people who depend on basic food crops.

Yet, rich people are also affected by diet. Many people in wealthier countries suffer from overeating and unhealthy diets. In the United States, poor eating habits have led to increased rates of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 33 percent of adults in the U.S. are obese, and 17 percent of children and adolescents are overweight.

Factors that contribute to being overweight or obese include nutrition and level of physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services encourages us all to engage in physical activity, which includes playing sports, doing household chores and walking.

They also recommend increasing your intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods.

Global Health Challenges and Victories

There are a growing number of health challenges in the world. Some diseases, like malaria, have been around for a long time, while new diseases, such as the West Nile virus, have recently emerged. The good news is that many people are working hard to prevent, treat and even eliminate these diseases.

One disease that has spread to all types of people in all corners of the globe is AIDS. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS, a condition that includes symptoms such as infections and/or cancers. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 33 million people worldwide live with HIV/AIDS. The CDC estimates that over 1 million Americans have HIV/AIDS.

Most health experts agree that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is the greatest threat to world health in terms of its proven potential for spreading. Although HIV/AIDS has reduced the average life span in some regions, people in countries such as Thailand and Uganda have been successful in limiting AIDS by encouraging education about how to prevent the spread of HIV. Educating yourself and others about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent its spread is one way that you can be part of a global solution.

Stay tuned for an in-depth look at the connections among health and other global issues in Friday’s Seattle P-I!

Activity

- ❖ Life expectancy is the average number of years that a person born today would be expected to live if the current mortality rate stays the same — that is, if the conditions affecting life do not change.

Choose a country that you want to know more about. Visit the World Health Organization (WHO) Web site at www.who.int/countries/en/ to learn more about health in your chosen country. Write three paragraphs about your country and offer a possible explanation for its average life expectancy. Share your findings with the rest of your class.

Take Action!

- ❖ Be part of a global solution for HIV/AIDS. Visit www.facingthefuture.org and click on *Fast Facts & Quick Actions* under Latest News from Facing the Future. Click on *HIV/AIDS* and choose one quick action to work on improving health around the world.