

Public Health is More than Just Medicine.

Coming into study public health I thought all you needed to eradicate a disease was medicine. Nature Valley is an impoverished township where I have been job-shadowing the community caregiver, Ronel. Tuberculosis is an airborne disease that involves a bacteria that grows inside the lungs. Despite the free health care and medicine that Ronel and the community clinic offer, this township still suffers from Tuberculosis due to poor housing conditions.

Most of the families live in two-bedroom houses that are often shared by another family. About half of the houses in Nature Valley don't have windows and the roofs are made out of rusty sheet metal that leak during the rain. Some residents can't afford to put glass in their window frames, so instead they cover it up with cardboard to keep the cold and the mosquitoes out. Ronel says, "The problem with not having windows or some kind of ventilation system is that people spread their sickness easily to their family." Since tuberculosis is an airborne disease, high-density housing allows it to spread easily. On top of not having any ventilation system to cycle out the germs, some of the houses are practically on top of each other, making this a perfect environment for tuberculosis and other diseases to spread.

There is a cure for tuberculosis; the patient must take a pill everyday for six to eight months. The South African government has provided free services and medicine for anyone in need, but in order to eradicate tuberculosis, the housing problems need to be fixed. The government should create stronger housing codes that would require a ventilation system other than the windows that are often broken. There also needs to be more community planning that would require for houses to be sufficiently spaced out from each other. Just with the three weeks I have been here, I have realized that public health policy will be most effective once the problems with infrastructure are addressed.



Home of a Tuberculosis Patient



The Shared Bathrooms



Another Home of Patient

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For any questions or feedback you may email me at Silviano11@gmail.com

And for further information search "tuberculosis" at

1. New England Journal of Medicine. www.Nejm.org.
2. Center for Global Development. www.Mispedia.org