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The national public health institute: long missed agenda

Abstract

The establishment of the National Public Health Institute (NPHI) marks a pivotal moment in our nation's commitment to bolstering public health. This commentary explores the imperative need for the NPHI as a response to the complex challenges facing our healthcare system. It emphasizes the institute's potential to address fragmented services, enhance data-driven decision-making and fortify our capacity to respond effectively to health crises. Furthermore, the abstract underscores the indispensable role of public support and advocacy in ensuring the NPHI's success, calling for a united front among citizens, healthcare professionals and advocacy groups. The NPHI is not merely a government initiative; it is a collective endeavor toward comprehensive and universal healthcare coverage. In conclusion, the commentary asserts that the NPHI represents a long-missing agenda, a cornerstone for a healthier, more resilient future and encourages unwavering commitment from all stakeholders to realize this transformative vision for our nation's well-being.

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Introduction

The health of a nation reflects its strength and vitality, a cornerstone upon which the prosperity and well-being of its citizens rest. In light of this fundamental truth, the recent announcement by the Ministry of Health to establish the National Public Health Institute (NPHI) is nothing short of a monumental step towards fortifying the foundation of our nation's health. It is a long-missed agenda, a clarion call that resonates with the very essence of our society. Getting back to earlier this year when the Tanzania Ministry of Health declared an outbreak of an unidentified illness in Bukoba district, Kagera region.[1] At that time about 5 lives were claimed[2] and it was about two weeks already therefore the lessons learnt from that situation was delayed information dissemination on the epidemic outbreak, what does this tell us? There is a gap in Our Surveillance system. We have our surveillance system but we did not detect on time while time is the essence in epidemic control, in addition, all of us have witnessed what we've been through in the past two to three years after the COVID-19 pandemic,[3,4] a lots of lives lost, a lot of comorbidities and long-term suffering, but we've also seen what we've also achieved in universal health coverage and vaccination which define the gap toward the national health security and universal health coverage at large therefore this bring the need of National Public Health Institute. October 05, 2023 during Tanzania Health Summit, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) held a vibrant health forum with a hot theme on the lately public health burning Agenda mostly in Africa, which goes by 'Vision for the establishment of National Public Health Institute in Tanzania. Discussion was based on the prospects and challenges of developing such an institute and to create a plan for its execution, this forum brought together specialists as well as enthusiastic entities from the public and private sectors. The purpose of it was to highlight how crucial it is to establish NPHI within our country and this can define the aim of this article.

The need for national public health institute

As we navigate the complex landscape of modern healthcare, the need for a dedicated institution like the NPHI becomes glaringly evident. Our current healthcare system, while commendable, has faced multifaceted challenges[5] fragmented services, insufficient data-driven decision-making and a lack of robust coordination. These issues have, at times hindered our ability to respond effectively to public health crises. The NPHI emerges as the remedy to these ailments. It will possess the potential to bridge the gaps to act as a lighthouse guiding our nation through turbulent healthcare waters. By consolidating resources, streamlining data collection and analysis and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration, the NPHI will poise to enhance our capacity to address pressing health issues. In addition, NPHI will serve as a one-stop shop for decision makers in Public Health as it combines various distributed functions in public health such as surveillance systems, national public health laboratory, public health research, workforce development, training, emergency preparedness and response, disease prevention and health promotion and infection prevention control. These duties are currently dispersed throughout the Ministry of Health's numerous departments and agencies.

In addition, during Tanzania Health Summit this year this matter emerged and different health experts debated about it, but all of them pointed out on the need of NPHI.[4] NPHI will play a crucial role in coordinating essential public health functions, enhancing public health surveillance, improving outbreak detection and response, strengthening diagnostic services, research, training and capacity building.

That is to say, NPHI will have a mandate to lead the reaction to a major disease epidemic and pandemic, assist the country in handling them, develop and maintain a network of public health laboratories to conduct, gather, combine and disseminate research on public health to inform policy, organize adherence to global health regulations, to prevent, detect and control transmission of infectious diseases. Organize surveillance systems to gather, evaluate and comprehend information on infectious diseases in order to guide action. It has a great role in managing Public Health emergencies. It will employ cross-cutting, multi-sectoral one health strategies. Oversees multidisciplinary surge staffing as needed in preparedness and response in regards to Universal Health Coverage, NPHI provides a unique opportunity to create effective responses, improve efficiencies and hence reduce costs to enable each individual to access quality. Therefore, NPHI promises to be the cornerstone of our preparedness for future health crises, ensuring that we are not caught off guard again.[6]

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Public support and advocacy

While the establishment of the NPHI is undoubtedly a significant step, its success hinges on a united front of public support and advocacy. We citizens must recognize that the NPHI is not just a government initiative but a collective endeavor for the betterment of our health and well-being. To truly succeed, the NPHI requires consistent funding, commitment to transparency and active participation from civil society. It calls for partnerships between government bodies, healthcare professionals, research institutions and grassroots organizations. It necessitates a shared vision of a healthier, more resilient nation. Advocacy groups and citizens alike must raise their voices in support of this endeavor. We must ensure that the NPHI is adequately resourced, that its mission is upheld with unwavering dedication, and that it remains free from political interference. Our collective advocacy will serve as the bedrock upon which the NPHI can thrive.

Conclusion

The establishment of the National Public Health Institute represents a watershed moment in our nation's journey toward comprehensive and universal healthcare coverage. It is the realization of a long-missed agenda, a promise to safeguard the health and well-being of our citizens. As we embrace this historic initiative, we must remember that the NPHI's success lies not solely in its creation but in our unwavering commitment to its mission. Let us rally behind it with unyielding support, advocacy, and dedication, for in doing so, we are securing a brighter, healthier future for ourselves and the generations to come. The NPHI is not just an institution; it is a testament to our collective will to prioritize health, an investment in our nation's resilience and a testament to our commitment to ensuring that the health of our citizens remains a beacon of strength and vitality. In the creation of the NPHI, we lay the foundation for a healthier, more prosperous tomorrow, one in which the long-missed agenda of comprehensive public health is realized. Let us seize this opportunity, for it is a cornerstone upon which we can build a nation that thrives in health and unity.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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