



## **The Role of Football Players as a Model for Promoting Community Health**

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### **Dear Editor-in-Chief**

A healthy community is comprised of healthy individuals and in order to have a healthy individual, health promotion policies should be implanted. Health promotion consists of three components including health education, health protection and prevention which policymakers should be focused on (1).

According to The United States Joint Committee on Health Education and Promotion Terminology report in 2011, health education is defined as “Any combination of planned learning experiences using evidence-based practices and/or sound theories that provide the opportunity to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors.” (2).

So, health education can be used to achieve the goal of community health promotion. Providing Health education to the community can be done by different means and by different types of educators. Increasing the knowledge of people (i.e. education) will prompt a change in their behavior (3).

“A powerful tool that can enhance health education is the influence of celebrities. Brain regions involved in making positive associations are activated by seeing or hearing celebrity endorsements” (4). People are conditioned to react positively to celebrity advice and are subconsciously pushed to follow it. (4,5) So, using celebrities’

influence to enhance health education can be a part of health promotion programs.

One of the topics that has recently been discussed in the field of health promotion is using interorganizational collaboration for health promotion. This means cooperation between several organizations or organs to achieve health promotion. There are several benefits to interorganizational collaboration including:

1. Using individual skills and resources and aligning them toward a common goal.
2. Increasing individual and organizational learning.
3. Formation of new relationships for future partnership opportunities (6).

“Health and life campaign” as a campaign with the goal of health promotion, started its activity in 2012 and this activity continues to this day with improvements through time. The formation of this campaign was initially the result of collaboration between the municipality of Tehran and Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS).

The design of this campaign was based on the speeches of experts for a population of Tehran citizens, and in this regard, the municipality was responsible for providing meeting space and advertising for these meetings, and the university was responsible for selecting the topics and the relevant speakers. The campaign included weekly



lectures on various health topics, each one delivered by an expert on the subject.

Among the initial changes of this campaign, the participation of art groups can be mentioned. The purpose of the participation of these artistic groups was not only to entertain the audience, but also to convey the message of the meeting in the form of a play or music to the audience.

Another notable change in the campaign was the creation of a space for the speakers to communicate directly with the audience. After each session, the participants in the meeting, if they had any questions, in a preset environment outside the lecture venue, could refer to the expert and ask their questions in person.

Another important innovation in this campaign was the provision of free health services to meeting participants. Some examples include oral and dental health services, blood pressure measurement, blood sugar measurement, etc.

One of the turning points of this campaign was the presence of celebrities in this campaign, in which the role of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRIFF) was very significant and with the presence of the Football Federation, a triangle of cooperation was formed between the municipality of Tehran, Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the IRIFF. The role of the IRIFF was such that retired and active football players, as people who have significant influence in the society, participated in the meetings and the message of each meeting was conveyed to the audience by the players.

Unfortunately, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person meetings were suspended and meetings were held online.

In conclusion, from its beginning on September 2012 until September 2021, this campaign consisted of 173 in-person sessions and 96 online sessions, each of which lasted an average of 3 hours. The average age of the participants was 45 years old and 100 athletes participated in this campaign as influencers. Topics covered in the conferences included COVID-19, mental health, social problems, the elderly, exercise and related issues and the study of diseases such as cancer,

stroke, kidney failure, fatty liver, diabetes, sexual problems, asthma, infertility, obesity and sleep problems.

Health and life campaign demonstrates the significant effects of interorganizational collaboration on health promotion. In fact, by putting economic and advertising facilities, science and influence together, this campaign has created a model for creating similar campaigns. Other feature of this campaign includes the involvement of NGOs, charities and other organizations in promoting community health.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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