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Review Article

The Importance of Midwifery Services in Achieving Healthy Cities: A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: WHO has developed the Healthy Cities Project, based on how a city can be a healthy city. Effective delivery of midwifery services is very important in delivering healthy services to all segments of the society. In this study, we aimed to draw attention to the importance of effective provision of midwifery services in the way of being a healthy city.

Methods: Data were collected using the literature review method. The keywords "healthy city", "women-friendly city", "child-friendly city", "midwifery", "sustainable development" and "urban health" were used for the search. Turkish and English articles obtained through PubMed, GoogleAcademic were analyzed and compiled in line with the scope. The review of the subject was carried out between June and July 2022.

Results: Healthy societies and cities can be achieved by protecting children from all kinds of harm from prenatal period to adulthood, providing quality birth and postpartum services to mothers and making these services accessible. In order to reach a healthy society, midwifery care provided by midwives is very important to protect and improve the health of women, families and children, and especially to reduce health inequalities in the society. In order to be a healthy city, midwifery care services must be well organized.

Conclusion: The Healthy Cities Project makes significant contributions to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of health policies in the city. Each of the Sustainable Development Goals and the concept of a healthy city are interrelated. It is important for cities to organize and expand midwifery services well in order to achieve their sustainable development goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Cities can be described as living creatures, like organisms that are born, grow up and disappear in the course of time. Being healthy for every organism is important in order to maintain life and for all the structures of the organism to be correct and healthy. One of the main indicators for urban health is the people living in the city. As long as the health status of the people living in the city is well, the city will be healthy, as well [1]. It took about 200,000 years for the world population to reach 1 billion, and only 200 years to reach 7 billion from 1 billion. It is estimated that the world population will be between 9-9.5 billion by 2050. On the other hand, it is estimated that the rate of urbanization, which was 20% in 1920, will increase to 70% in 2050 globally. With the increasing urban population, many social, economic, and physical urban problems have emerged and continue to emerge. Among these issues are difficulties in providing clean water, solid and liquid waste problems, air pollution from vehicles and industries, psychological problems of city dwellers, and increasing health problems [2,3].

As various problems arising from the growth of cities continue to grow increasingly, a new level of consciousness has emerged for the concept of the city with the 1970s, and a movement has emerged that sees cities as an organism like a single body and tries to solve urban health problems from this point of view. The concept of a healthy city is a result of this awareness. The concept of a healthy city was first introduced by the World Health Organization in 1986. In 1986, the

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World Health Organization created a general model for urban health, using principles such as cooperation, participation and equality. At this point, he developed the Healthy Cities Project based on what a city is and what a healthy city should be [4,5].

Well-organized midwifery services are the basic condition for a healthy society. The midwife is responsible not only for the newborn and the mother, but also for the health of the family and society, especially the health of children, young people, women and men. Therefore, in order to be a healthy city, midwifery services must be well organized. In this study, it is aimed to draw attention to the importance of midwifery services in order to be a healthy city and achieve sustainable development goals.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Literature Review

Literature scanning method was used in the research. In the determination of the studies included in the literature review, Turkish and English articles were used, whose full texts were accessed from electronic databases PubMed, Googleacademic and internet search engines. In addition, books, reports, analyzes and articles published by national and international organizations were included in the evaluation.

As a result of the screening, a total of 38 sources published between 1978 and 2022 on the subject of a healthy city were included in the study. The keywords "healthy city", "women-friendly city", "child friendly city", "midwifery", "sustainable development" and "urban health" were used in the literature search. “And” and “,” are written between all keywords to ensure maximum sensitivity.

In this study, answers to five questions were sought:

- What is a healthy city?
- What is a healthy city project?
- What is the relationship between a healthy city and midwifery?
- What is a woman-friendly city and a child-friendly city?
- What is the importance of Midwifery Services in the way of being a healthy city?

These research questions were tried to be answered according to the results of the examination. With this study, it is aimed to draw attention to what should be done to become a healthy city and the importance of midwifery services in this regard.

In this way, the benefits of effective use of midwifery services will be brought to the attention of the world public.

RESULTS

What Is A Healthy City?

According to the approach of healthy cities, the city is likened to a complex organism with an internal dynamic that lives, breathes, grows, develops and changes like living things [1,5]. The healthy cities project was first launched in 1987 with 11 pilot cities in the European Region. The project grew rapidly and covered 35 cities. Cities worked directly with WHO following an application and selection process, and subsequently formed the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. What started as a pilot project quickly turned into a European movement. Today's Healthy cities project is a global project that originated in Europe and spanned all six WHO regions [5].

A healthy city is described by a process, not an outcome.

- A healthy city is not a city that has attained a certain health status.
- It is aware of its health and endeavors to improve it. For this reason, any city can be a healthy city regardless of its current health status.
- A healthy city is a city that consistently creates and develops its physical and social environments and expands community resources that enable people to reciprocally support each other in fulfilling all the functions of life and reaching their maximum potential [6].

In order to be a healthy city, the following items must exist in urban life and management.

- Adequacy of health services and social services
- Creating health awareness
- Prevention of non-communicable diseases
- Fight against alcohol and drugs
- Active life formation
- Healthy food and nutrition opportunities
- Establishing elderly and child-friendly environments
- Adequacy of accommodation facilities and comfort environments for health
- Healthy transportation opportunities
- Establishing safe environments
- Reducing exposure to noise and pollution
- Creating smoke-free environments

Taking measures related to climate change and public health [4].

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The Healthy Cities Project has been the leading driver of change since its inception, creating healthier urban environments that support people's health and well-being. It has also been a source of inspiration, creating a driving force for healthy cities in all other WHO regions. Currently, 1400 municipalities are involved in the healthy cities project [7].

In the report "Healthy Cities: An Effective Approach to A Rapidly Changing World" published in 2020, the World Health Organization stated that healthy cities are a dynamic movement developing worldwide, leaving behind 30 years. indicated that it was more relevant than ever before. Healthy Cities is a strategic tool for health development and well-being in urban settings. The project is based on the recognition of the importance of action at the local, urban level and the key role of local governments. This project is in the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and health promotion agendas, as well as a key component in the World Health Organization (WHO) work program for 2019-2023 [8].

Healthy Cities and Midwifery

The WHO healthy cities project has been actively engaging local governments since its inception. It places health at the top of city governments' political, social, economic and environmental agendas and makes health everyone's business. Cities are important economic drivers influencing national development. They are also mechanisms that empower communities to identify social needs, involve citizens in health concerns, and create social cohesion that reduces health inequalities [5,9].

The WHO Healthy Cities project is a direct response to a series of global and European policy initiatives that are changing the way people think and understand health. The concepts of health for all, equality in health, health promotion, sustainable development and good governance continue to be the main goals of healthy cities today [5]. WHO Southeast Asian countries are home to an urban population of 750 million, accounting for an average of 34% of the total population. The Regional Laboratory on urban governance for health and well-being (UGHW) is a social laboratory that seeks to develop appropriate city models for health and well-being using an integrated approach. It has applications such as healthy city, smoke-free city, age-friendly city, child-friendly city, smart city, green city. The initiative addresses the social, economic and environmental issues of cities. The Theory of Change will be developed for each city to translate visions into actions that promote equity and well-being in health through good governance [10].

Health in all policies is a sector-wide public policy approach that systematically explains the effects of decisions on health and avoids harmful effects on health in order to improve public health, reduce risk and promote equity in health. Healthy Cities is continually enriched with concepts and methodologies to address current public health issues in urban settings. Traditional approaches to public health may have limited impact and scope in the context of cities [8].

Therefore, the main issues to be examined by Healthy Cities are:

1. Focus on both health and well-being.
2. Emphasis on the right to health for all and universal health insurance.
3. Consider the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Healthy Cities as a whole.
4. To evaluate in detail the social determinants of health and health inequalities.
5. Creating supportive environments for health for all in the promotion and development of health,
6. Investing in creating healthy places and making healthy choices easy choices.
7. To understand the positive and negative effects of urban housing on health and well-being [8].

It is necessary for a healthy city to organize the steps to be a healthy society. Therefore, it will be the right step to understand urban local values well and develop the right employment policies for local and social development [11]. Strengthening local public health services and their capacity to deal with health emergencies is a key step towards being a healthy city [8].

The midwifery profession, known since the existence of humanity, has continued its development in parallel with the scientific developments in health and has become a professional discipline including science, art, and ethical values [12]. Midwives play a vital role in the delivery and accessibility of healthcare services. There are midwives in charge in all fields of society who are critical to improving health outcomes. The absence of this occupational group will lead us to see healthcare systems that are hazardously sensitive and vulnerable to collapse in the shadow of the global crisis [13].

Various determinants, including commercial, political, ecological, and cultural determinants of health, have received special attention in recent years, particularly under the Sustainable Development Goals [8]. Sustainable and healthy urban policies are one of the building blocks for "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, enduring and sustainable". The primary objectives of healthy urban policies involve the reduction and prevention of air pollution and physical inactivity, which are important risk factors for non-communicable diseases, especially traffic deaths and injuries [14].

With the 2030 Agenda, United Nations offer a unified global plan for sustainable development that is

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applicable to both developing and developed countries for the first time. The urban extent of sustainable cities and communities through Goal 11 is clearly accepted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, Goal 3 on health and well-being aims to "decrease premature deaths associated with non-communicable diseases by one-third through prevention and treatment, and improve mental health and well-being by 2030 [15]. Cities can act as stakeholders with WHO in the implementation of the SDGs at the local level and adoption of a national WHO Healthy Cities approach as application tools. At this point, reaching ''Health for All'' depends on the sufficient number of well-trained trained, well-supported midwives who receive wages and appreciation in proportion to the quality of service and care they provide [16].

Women Friendly Cities and Midwifery

The "Women Friendly Cities" project has appeared in many countries, considering that women cannot benefit from urban space at an equal level with men due to the roles traditionally attributed to them and local governments represent the most appropriate point in the fight against the continuation and increase of social inequalities in the context of gender and in development of a truly egalitarian society [17]. By the most basic definition, women friendly cities are cities that promote the equal participation of women with men in all areas of urban life. In more details, a women friendly city is a city where structures are effective and accessible, comfort, safe and equal use of physical spaces for women and girls are assured, and the planning processes of social life, transportation, public housing and infrastructure services are carried out by considering the principle of gender mainstreaming.

The first step to achieve a women friendly city is to recognize women and girls living in the city and to analyze their needs, problems and possibilities correctly. Women friendly cities enable;

- To have women access health, education and social services; employment opportunities, quality, extensive urban services (transportation, housing, security, etc.);
- To ensure mechanisms to guarantee their rights when they are exposed to violence;
- To support their involvement in all areas of urban life at equal rate with men by providing their participation in the planning and decision-making processes of local governments [18].

Women's educational background, active participation in political and business life and indicators related to women's health are effective in determining development level of countries. The most important parameters within these indicators are maternal and infant mortality rate, the status of women in that country, the level of economic development, and the quality of health services [19]. Women die mostly due to complications seen during pregnancy, at the time of delivery and in postpartum period. This is explained by social status of women, gender roles, low level of education, poverty, and gender inequality in developing countries [20]. Due to gender inequality, women are less healthy, less educated, less involved in the labor and working in jobs with less revenue. Therefore, it is of primary importance to empower women and improve their position and to reflect the gender equality perspective on policies, strategies and practices [21].

Defending women's rights is one of the important contemporary roles of midwives. This defensiveness role of the midwife includes practices such as protecting women, taking into account their needs, helping and supporting in the decision-making process about their health. In addition, advocacy role for a midwife requires being the voice of a woman when she is a strange environment, she cannot speak for herself or there is a delicate situation [22].

The city belongs to everyone and everyone has the right to use the city fairly and equally but women and men don't use common living areas in the same way [23]. The chances, of benefitting from the economic, social, and spatial opportunities offered by the living environment as well as their needs or problems are not the same. Therefore, policies (lack of policies) towards common living areas affect men and women in different ways. In the case that many services which should be supplied in cities are not supplied with sufficient quality and low cost, the resultant gap is usually filled by women. Therefore, the city should be women friendly. This is also a must because numerous studies have revealed that the happiness of women is a criterion for the welfare and happiness level of the society [24].

Antenatal care, adolescent pregnancy, neonatal health, and prevention of deaths in children under 5 years of age are particularly noted as the key to achieving the public health target. Other national and international areas of interest affecting population health (both women and families) include increasing cesarean rates and other interventions during childbirth, the importance of positive parenting in the early postpartum period, and perinatal mental health. In these areas, midwifery services are a golden opportunity for evidence-based public health interventions to potentially improve the long-term health of women and families [25].

Women's health focuses on physical, psychological and social requirements of women throughout their lives. Therefore, the general physical and psychological health of the woman as well as reproductive functions and sicknesses should be taken into consideration.

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Healthcare professionals serving in this field are obliged to know and investigate women-specific situations (genital system cancers, menopause, etc.) and socio-cultural and professional factors (poverty, rape, incest, domestic violence, etc.) related to women's health problems [26].

As a result, sexual and reproductive health problems which have an important share among women's health problems are commonly seen in the world. Prevention and reduction programs for sexual and reproductive health problems contribute to increasing the health level of women and accordingly society. In this sense besides all healthcare professionals, especially midwives have important duties and responsibilities [20].

Child Friendly City and Midwifery

Friendly cities are cities for people that think about the people they live in. The first one of the different approaches to the city for people started with the quest for child friendly cities [27]. At this juncture, "The City of Children Project" seems to be a pioneering and comprehensive study. Child-friendly approaches are based on the argument that a child-friendly settlement is friendly to everyone [17].

The global effect of urbanization gradually decreased the chances of children participating completely and freely in urban life. Nowadays, children encounter many negative problems in the name of their own development in cities. Crowded, unsafe and polluted environments provide fewer opportunities for learning, play and recreation. However, all parts of the society cannot benefit from the opportunities offered by the city in the same way which causes rapid urbanization inequality [28].

While **Child Friendly City** targets for the child to become an adult individual who takes care of her city in the future, it shouldn't be perceived as just a 'city with many playgrounds. *Child Friendly City* is to be a favorable and ideal city for everyone. The child friendly city initiative was launched as an extension of the decree which aimed to create livable spaces for everyone at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1996. The initiative is based on UNICEF's terminology and the principle of 'children first' [29].

Midwifery services are important in terms of "access to health services, protecting and promoting health and protecting and promoting child health [30]. The responsibilities of midwives for child health can be listed as follows.

- Ensuring immunity in children,
- Correction of adverse environmental conditions,
- İmplementation of action plans on the prevention of violence and injuries,
- Investigation and reporting of violence against children,
- Increasing children's benefit from preventive and improving services in the health system,
- Increasing the accessibility of children with disabilities to health services [31,32].

Therefore, in a system where midwifery services do not take place, it cannot be expected that babies begin to be healthy and their children continue their lives in a healthy way. At this point, it should not be forgotten that midwifery services should be designed correctly for children in order to be a child-friendly city.

DISCUSSION

Health is the business of all sectors not just the health sector and every sector should make the necessary contribution to this topic. Health problems that emerge in urban life should be one of the central goals of many professions and representation and they should work in collaboration especially on urban planning, a healthy environment, a peaceful and livable city.The Healthy Cities Project makes important contributions to establishing and following up health goals and health policies in urban life, evaluating their practices and conducting constantly studies in each member city [3].

Healthy societies and cities can be achieved by protecting children from all kinds of damages starting from the antenatal period until they reach adultness, providing mothers with a qualitative birth service, offering them postpartum protective and supportive services and making these services accessible. Maternal and child health cannot be thought separately. First, the mother must be healthy for the child to grow and develop in a healthy family. The biological, cognitive, emotional, and social health care needs of mothers and children throughout their lives should be addressed with a holistic approach and should support family integrity. Policies on education, nutrition, delivery of health services, sheltering, etc, should be developed in order to develop maternal and child health for economic and social development [33].

The first article of the Sustainable Development Goals is "the eradication of all forms of poverty everywhere". The problem of poverty has become almost identical with women today. Lack of access to education, health services and employment opportunities are factors that are thought to have a direct impact on women's poverty. Gender inequality causes women to be unable to access education and employment opportunities. If this situation is not intervened, the women of the world will become increasingly poor. It is important for midwives to know the effects and consequences of poverty on women's

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health, to communicate with social services and aid organizations when necessary, to guide them to solve the problem, and to take an active role in the formation of public policies and civil society activities in the fight against poverty [34,35].

The 5th article of the Sustainable Development Goals is "to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls" (SDG, 2020). full and effective participation is emphasized within the scope of this article. It has been revealed that gender inequality is a major obstacle to the development of countries and cities. At this point, it is important for midwives to take part in the development and implementation of policies that empower women with the role of change agents [34,35].

One of the Sustainable Development Goals, "Assuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages" is the 3rd among development goals. This goal includes reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates, ending preventable deaths in children under the age of five, and ensuring universal access to reproductive health services, including sexual and family planning, as well as information and education. Midwifery services play a key role in achieving these goals and providing quality, effective and accessible health services [34,35].

The midwifery profession has a significant impact on ending preventable maternal and neonatal deaths and improving the health of the communities they serve. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, international cooperation with the midwifery workforce is a must [36].

Midwives, who are defined as "the fingertip of service" in primary health care, are very important in protecting and promoting women and families and reducing health inequalities with the midwifery care they undertake [37]. One of the most important indicators showing the level of development of a society is the maternal and infant mortality rate. Midwives serving in primary health care institutions should attach necessary importance to pregnant, postpartum, infant and child follow ups in order to protect and promote women's and children's health [38].

CONCLUSION

Each of the Sustainable Development Goals and the concept of a healthy city are related with each other. Achievement in one goal will increase success in achieving other goals, as well. It is recommended for midwives, who are the biggest supporter for women and children to have health, education and good living conditions throughout their life, to take an active role in goals directly associated with especially women's and children's health in order to achieve sustainable development goals in the light of principles of Healthy Cities.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that there was no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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