

The History of Public Health – a new perspective for bone and joint disease

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“Public Health” is a label which many interpret as the management of hospitals or infectious disease outbreaks. To those involved in Public Health, however, its meaning is much broader, and incorporates any activities designed to reduce the burden of disease and to improve the health of the public. The focus of public health is *upstream*, away from the constant flow of patients appearing in clinicians’ waiting rooms, and towards the healthy population of potential patients.

Chronic non-fatal diseases such as bone and joint disease are less likely to attract public-health solutions than, say, infections or cancer, simply because they are less visible in the public’s eye. But there remains enormous potential for prevention of chronic disease if public health approaches are adopted.

In this talk, I review some of the successes of public health over recent centuries, and contrast these with progress in the prevention of bone and joint disease. I will discuss strategies of preventive medicine which might be successfully employed in the management of bone and joint disease over the next decade.