

# Common Risk Factor Approach: A Sustainable Route to Universal Health Coverage

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**Abstract**—The Common Risk Factor Approach (CRFA) is a sustainable route used for multi-disciplinary health promotion programs, which share common risk factors for various diseases. Many risk factors have proven to be negative impact on oral health and also, overall health. This paper provides an overview of the Rationale of CRFA.

CRFA can be greatly be adapted to major public health initiatives to tackle the Non-communicable disease [NCD] burden and gain universal health coverage as per World Health Organization. By adopting this approach, the dental health professionals can effectively reduce the morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases and decrease the incidence of oral diseases, by working within and between their professional organizations to find enduring solutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is experiencing a rapid health transition with a rising burden of Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), causing significant morbidity and mortality, both in urban and rural areas, with a considerable loss in potentially productive years of life (age 35-64 years) [1].

NCDs are estimated to account for about 60 percent of all the deaths. Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes make the largest contribution to morbidity and mortality due to NCDs [1].

In India, majority of the resources are channelized towards providing curative services, rather than preventive care. Preventive care is also restricted to health education and diagnostic check-up. Tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol are the significant behavioral risk factors [2].

Dental professionals are trying to bring out a change in a behavior which is a cause for many NCDs. But a major limitation to implement this measure is that mouth is seen as separated from the rest of the body. The outcome of this

narrow and isolated approach leads to duplication and merging of contradictory health messages to the public.

Oral health is an important component of general health [2]. Causative or risk factors in oral disease are also common for major general diseases. It is now felt that an integrated approach be developed for the prevention and control of NCDs as part of primary health care system. Such a concerted action is bound to reduce the burden of NCDs, bring out overall improvement in health and length of life.

Sheiham and Watt in the year 2000 [3] introduced this concept “Common Risk Factor Approach (CRFA)”, integrating oral health promotion with the health promotion. This approach assumes that the chronic NCDs share a common risk. (See Figure 1)

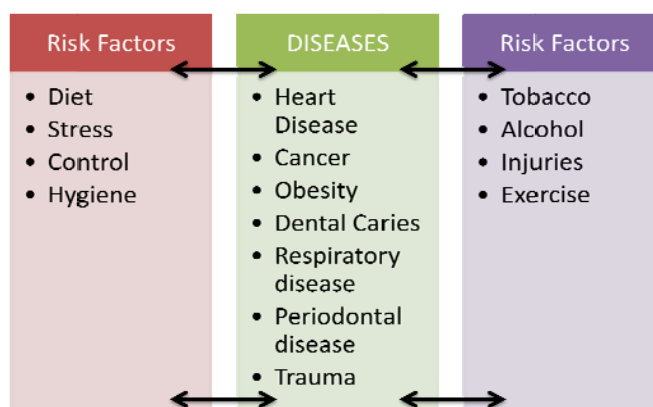


Figure 1: Interplay of Risk Factors and NCDs;  
Modified from Sheiham and Watt, 2000 [3]

The rationale behind such an approach is that directing action towards these common risks and their underlying social determinants will help to improve a range of chronic conditions. This approach provides to build a platform for partnership particularly in countries with uneven distribution of services.

It is now high time that we need a mix of complementary public health approach; focusing on building healthy public policy, creating supportive environment for health, strengthening community action for health, developing personal skills and re-orienting health services. It is vital that the approaches to health promotion should address the broader determinants of health. Policy makers, key stakeholders, health professionals, allied health and non-health professionals should gather on a common platform and strive for the betterment of a healthy society.

## REFERENCES

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