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# Think Strategically

## Making Wellness in Puerto Rico A Public Policy Priority for the Healthcare Ecosystem

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### A Deep Dive into the eight dimensions of Wellness

Last week, we began a series of articles that discuss the global wellness trend in which individuals worldwide seek ways to safeguard and enhance their mental and physical well-being. As we transition from pandemic to endemic, the demand for wellness solutions remains robust. It continues to grow, and that is why it matters for the Puerto Rico Healthcare Ecosystem to embrace it and make it part of the public policy mandate of the Department of Health.

Wellness is a holistic concept encompassing individuals' and communities' physical, mental, and social well-being. Wellness is not merely the absence of disease or illness but a dynamic process of achieving optimal health and fulfilling one's potential. Various factors influence Wellness, such as genetics, lifestyle, environment, culture, and personal choices. Therefore, Wellness requires a multidimensional and integrative approach that addresses the interrelated aspects of human functioning.

One of the most widely used frameworks for understanding and promoting Wellness is the eight dimensions of wellness model, developed by Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute. According to this model, Wellness consists of eight interconnected dimensions: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, environmental, financial, occupational, and social. Each dimension contributes to one's overall Wellness and affects the other dimensions. Therefore, achieving Wellness requires balance and harmony among all the dimensions.

Last week, we mentioned the eight dimensions of Wellness, and this week, we will explain each and its importance for our well-being.

### The eight dimensions of Wellness definitions and examples

The eight dimensions of Wellness are defined along with some examples of implementation:

1. **Physical Wellness:** The ability to maintain a healthy body and lifestyle and to prevent and manage diseases and injuries. Physical Wellness involves engaging in regular physical activity, eating a balanced and nutritious diet, getting adequate sleep and rest, avoiding harmful substances, and seeking medical care when needed. The healthcare ecosystem can use wearable devices, such as smartwatches, fitness trackers, and blood pressure monitors, to collect and analyze data on the vital signs, activity levels, and health behaviors of individuals and populations and to provide them with real-time feedback alerts and recommendations.

2. **Intellectual Wellness:** The ability to expand one's knowledge and skills and to use them creatively and critically. Intellectual Wellness involves pursuing lifelong learning, being curious and open-minded, challenging oneself mentally, and participating in cultural and artistic activities. The healthcare ecosystem can use online courses, such as MOOCs, webinars, and tutorials, to provide individuals and populations with access to high-quality and diverse learning opportunities and to enable them to learn at their own pace and convenience.
3. **Emotional Wellness:** The ability to experience, express, and manage one's feelings and to cope with stress and challenges. Emotional Wellness involves being aware and accepting of one's emotions, developing resilience and optimism, seeking and giving support, and practicing self-care and relaxation techniques. The healthcare ecosystem can use chatbots like Woebot, Wysa, and Replika to provide individuals and populations with conversational agents that can listen to their problems, provide empathetic responses, and offer cognitive behavioral therapy techniques.
4. **Spiritual Wellness:** The ability to find meaning and purpose in one's life and to connect with oneself, others, and a higher power or principle. Spiritual Wellness involves exploring one's values and beliefs, being respectful and compassionate, practicing gratitude and forgiveness, and engaging in activities that nourish one's spirit, such as meditation, prayer, or volunteering. The healthcare ecosystem can use meditation apps, such as Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer, to provide individuals and populations with access to guided meditations, mindfulness exercises, and relaxation techniques and to help them reduce stress, improve focus, and increase happiness.
5. **Environmental Wellness:** The ability to respect and protect the natural environments that sustain life and to live in harmony with them. Environmental Wellness involves being aware of the impact of one's actions on the environment, reducing one's ecological footprint, conserving and recycling resources, and advocating for environmental justice and sustainability. The healthcare ecosystem can use sensors, such as air quality sensors, water quality sensors, and weather sensors, to collect and analyze data on the environmental conditions and trends that affect the health and wellness of individuals and populations and to provide them with alerts, recommendations, and solutions.
6. **Financial Wellness:** The ability to manage one's finances effectively and responsibly and to achieve one's financial goals. Financial Wellness involves budgeting, saving, investing, avoiding debt, planning for the future, and seeking financial education and advice when needed. The healthcare ecosystem can use robo-advisors, such as Betterment, Wealthfront, and Acorns, to provide individuals and populations with automated and personalized financial planning and investing services to help them achieve their goals and dreams.
7. **Occupational Wellness:** The ability to find satisfaction and fulfillment in one's work and to balance it with other aspects of life. Occupational Wellness involves choosing a career that aligns with one's interests, skills, and values, developing one's professional competencies, being productive and ethical, and seeking opportunities for growth and development. The healthcare ecosystem can use gamification, such as Badgeville, Bunchball, and Classcraft, to provide individuals and populations with engaging and motivating ways to learn and work and to reward them with badges, points, and prizes.
8. **Social Wellness:** The ability to establish and maintain positive and supportive relationships with others and to contribute to the well-being of one's community. Social Wellness involves

communicating effectively, respecting diversity, being empathetic and cooperative, and participating in social and civic activities. The healthcare ecosystem can use video conferencing, such as Zoom, Skype, and FaceTime, to provide individuals and populations with ways to see and hear their friends and family and to participate in online groups and events.

### **The Final Word: Nurturing Wellness and Resilience in Puerto Rico's Healthcare Ecosystem**

In conclusion, wellness is a holistic and multidimensional concept encompassing individuals' and communities' physical, mental, and social well-being. Wellness is not merely the absence of disease or illness but a dynamic process of achieving optimal health and fulfilling one's potential. Various factors influence wellness, such as genetics, lifestyle, environment, culture, and personal choices. Therefore, wellness requires a balance and harmony among the eight dimensions of wellness: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, environmental, financial, occupational, and social.

The healthcare ecosystem is vital in promoting and supporting wellness among individuals and populations and preventing and treating diseases and illnesses. However, the healthcare ecosystem faces many challenges and inefficiencies, such as rising costs, poor quality, limited access, fragmentation, and lack of coordination. These challenges affect the health and wellness outcomes of the people and communities that the healthcare ecosystem serves.

Therefore, the healthcare ecosystem should treat wellness and the eight dimensions of wellness as a strategic priority and a shared responsibility. The adoption of holistic and integrative approach that recognizes the interdependence and interconnection of the eight wellness dimensions and addresses the needs and preferences of the individuals and populations it serves. Also leveraging the potential of technological innovation, such as digital platforms, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing, to create new solutions and improve existing ones that enhance the wellness of the people and communities it serves.

We extend a fervent call to action to the Secretary of Health of Puerto Rico. The challenges faced by the healthcare ecosystem, including rising costs, limited access, and lack of coordination, demand strategic attention. Recognizing wellness and its dimensions as a shared responsibility, we urge adopting a comprehensive, integrative approach. Embrace the interdependence of these dimensions, aligning initiatives with the diverse needs and preferences of individuals and communities.

The Department of Health can harness the potential of digital platforms, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing to pioneer new solutions and enhance existing ones. This forward-looking approach will address current challenges and position Puerto Rico as a leader in innovative healthcare practices. In this call to action, we envision a future where Puerto Rico's healthcare ecosystem becomes a beacon of wellness, fostering a culture of resilience and prosperity. The time is now to transform challenges into opportunities and build a healthcare system prioritizing the well-being of individuals and communities across the island.



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