Editorial

Amadea Britton

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The current issue of the Journal of Public Health is composed of submissions that remind us that diversity is deeply fundamental to the study and practice of public health. The articles gathered here were conducted on both regional and international scales, among slum-dwellers and medical students, and range from academic literature reviews on nursing theory to field tests of low-cost screening procedures in developing countries. However, it is precisely this wide range of issues addressed, differing methodological approaches, and cultural, socio-demographic, and geographic variation that make the themes that emerge in this issue so important—they are truly global and universally applicable hallmarks of public health.

Firstly, this issue highlights the necessity of examining health on different scales, from the national to the regional. Dr. Olalekan A. Uthman from the University of Birmingham examines data from the Nigeria 2003 Demography and Health Survey to explore the patterns and determinants of nutritional status among Nigerian women. Dr. Uthman finds that about two-thirds of women surveyed had BMIs in the normal range, but that those women with a lower socioeconomic position had a greater risk of underweight, while those women with a higher socioeconomic position were more likely to experience overweight. The national scale of the data also allowed Dr. Uthman to observe significant regional differences in nutritional status.

Chakraborty et al. of India, working on a much smaller but similarly illuminating scale, investigate the relationship of body mass index and systolic, diastolic, and mean

arterial blood pressure among male slum-dwellers in Kolkata, India, and find that although this population had a low mean BMI and high rate of under nutrition, increased BMI was still an independent risk factor for hypertension. This result is an excellent argument for the study of specialized population groups.

Evaluation is the second important theme of this issue. Through evaluation we can identify concealed or emerging health problems, develop new medical and policy strategies, and test the efficacy of already implemented programs. In this issue we see all three types of evaluation. Dr. Aleksander M. Visnjic and colleagues investigate the intensity and influence of stress on medical students in Serbia in a prospective study of 858 medical students of Nis University in Serbia. They uncover a significant mental health threat: 67 percent of those interviewed reported constant exposure to stressful situations, correlated with factors such as corruption, social situation, lack of money, and exam pressure.

Demonstrating the importance of evaluation in finding new health solutions, Dr. Agte of the Agharkar Research Institute in Pune, India, and Dr. Tillu of Ram Narain Ruia College in Mumbai developed and tested a semi-quantitative nail color scale for prediction of hemoglobin concentration. The scale, which the team's findings indicate has statistically significant predictive value, can now be researched further as an inexpensive, non-invasive screening procedure for anemia, useful in developing countries and rural areas.

Last in this section are two studies evaluating programs currently in place. Dr. Hala Ibrahim Awadalla and colleagues conducted a descriptive study of utilization of maternal and child health services and factors affecting patient dissatisfaction in rural and urban health clinics in El-Minia City, Egypt. Dr. Awadalla's team found that the frequency of women attending the clinic for curative

A. Britton (✉)
Research Association Public Health Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt,
Fiedlerstrasse 33,
01307 Dresden, Germany
e-mail: amadea.britton@gmail.com

services, antenatal care, and delivery care was greater in the rural center, while the urban center received more women seeking family planning services. Causes of dissatisfaction included long waiting times and poor facilities, and overall patients from the urban center reported higher satisfaction. Zinzi et al. of Italy investigated the outcomes of an intensive inpatient rehabilitation program for those with Huntington's disease in the Italian Welfare System. The study, based on responses to a questionnaire by patients who had undergone the program and their caregivers, found that the program led to perceived improvements in a number of areas, including balance, motor control, and mood. Such feedback allows for support of successful programs.

Finally, this issue shows that critical peer review of theory and practice is an important tool in advancing public health. Fleischer et al. of the Institute of Health and Nursing Sciences at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in Germany have conducted a systematic literature review to explore how the terms nurse-patient interaction and

nurse-patient communication are defined and used in the nursing literature. Their review finds that the relationship of interaction and communication is implicit in the literature rather than clearly defined and suggests that the integration of theories of communication originating from within the nursing field is necessary.

In the last article of this issue, awareness of the scientific literature is also addressed by Dr. Kamal Chaouachi in his comment on the article "Does shisha smoking affect blood pressure and heart rate?" Dr. Chaouachi argues that the article in question (published in vol. 17, no. 2/April 2009 of the Journal of Public Health) contains several errors related to the chemistry of shisha smoke and suggests that important additional research on the subject has not been properly addressed by the authors.

I hope that as you read, these varied articles will coalesce into a snapshot of both the diversity and universality that characterize the current state of the field.