Editorial

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Published online: 31 December 2009
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The first issue of the journal for 2010 features empirical research articles, research reviews and theoretical topics covering a wide variety of public health matters.

It begins with a study on one of the most preventable types of cancer. However, in contrast to other Western European countries, in Austria comparatively high numbers of age-adjusted incidence and mortality rates of cervical carcinoma persist. Discussing the effectiveness of immunization against high-risk virus genotypes in addition to screening programs, Zechmeister et al. present the results of an epidemiological long-term prognosis for cervical cancer in Austria considering different prevention strategies, i.e., screening only, screening plus vaccination of girls and screening in addition to vaccination of girls and boys. Against a background of increased budget constraints, the results of the study are extremely relevant in answering the question whether it will be worth introducing a publicly financed HPV vaccination program, as it seems less effective than cheaper alternatives, such as improving the quality of screening systems.

Malignant neoplasm is also the subject of the manuscript by Porzsolt and Hölzel, who analyze an intriguing hypothesis by Norwegian epidemiologists. The Norwegian study truly challenges every fact that is known about breast cancer as it assumes that 22% of breast cancer cases would disappear spontaneously. Interestingly, Porzsolt and Hölzel indicate that there are more data that underpin than refute this hypothesis. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes how

important it is to continue researching and investigating, yet also reminds us how difficult it sometimes is to change from traditional concepts to new ideas.

The aim of the third article is to discuss in what ways civil society groups and public health practitioners can influence the public health policy process. This paper by Laverack points to the importance of the process of community empowerment, but argues that the policy process itself does not offer many opportunities for the public to be involved. Laverack sees the challenge for public health practitioners in the task of determining strategies that facilitate the engagement of civil society groups in the policy process.

Another challenge for public health practitioners is the fight against stroke, which is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Rau and co-authors outline an ongoing initiative in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, that aims first and foremost at decreasing pre-hospital time. The article describes aims, methods and the conceptional framework of the program named “Healthy Lower Rhine...against Stroke,” which is a project of the “Healthy Lower Rhine Network.” It draws the conclusion that in the context of limited resources, the program could provide an approach for realizing sustainable and intersectoral public health interventions with considerable impact for the region.

The next manuscript by Baidi Bahari and Ling leads us to Malaysia. It provides insight into customer satisfaction with community pharmacy services in Kuala Lumpur by shedding further light on the health questions population groups are especially concerned about and which factors mainly affect customer satisfaction. In addition, the findings of the cross-sectional descriptive study reveal that gender, race, level of education and type of pharmacy visited have no significant impact on customer satisfaction.

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The following two contributions address the highly important topic of migration of health workers. While the first one by Habermann and Stagge concentrates on the global context of nurse migration, the second one by Corea and Bacigaluppi examines the financial situation of medical trainees as an underlying reason for migration. Habermann and Stagge thoroughly explore the deep impact of nurse migration on nursing care and professional standards, address potential research objectives and present national and supranational policies for discussion. Corea and Bacigaluppi compare the situation of eight European countries and Israel with regard to working conditions and salaries of medical trainees. Their survey results confirm that economic issues, such as low salaries, present major reasons for migration—for instance, to the UK, where the most attractive training positions are offered.

A further topic that this issue reflects on is smoking. The study by Croghan et al. evaluates differences in smoking abstinence between white and minority smokers. The authors analyze data from a randomized, clinical trial conducted in the US. Their findings confirm that overall

smoking abstinence rates among minority smokers are lower than those of white smokers who are trying to quit and that minority smokers may be less accepting of nicotine replacement products than white smokers. The study suggests that future research should center on improving treatment strategies for minority smokers. The article by Chaouachi opens a debate on narghile (hookah, shisha) smoking. Chaouachi illustrates why any public health intervention concerning narghile involves an overdue critique of the narghile smoking machine now regarded as “standardized.”

The contribution by Goldgruber and Ahrens exhibits the latest scientific findings concerning the effectiveness of health promotion interventions in the workplace by summarizing the results of current meta-analysis and systematic reviews. The scientific literature proves that comprehensive multimodal programs are more successful than projects that only include singular interventions. The authors, moreover, call for the continuation of such interventions because the results of the study clarify that workplace health promotion programs are mostly effective.