
Editorial

Leveraging globalization to solve public health problems

Journal of Public Health Policy (2011) 32, 279–280. doi:10.1057/jphp.2011.40

Our journal has been very conscious of its global mission. Public health faces problems everywhere. We publish research and policy articles to be helpful far from where a problem was encountered, tackled, analyzed, and results captured for publication. Yet we know that this is not enough. More engaging dialogues would be productive.

Global congresses bring together public health people from all over the world; for example, the World Congresses on Public Health or the International Conferences on HIV and AIDS. Similar congresses occur in diverse fields. Yet even these well-attended meetings do not guarantee dialogue and collaboration. Research is presented and listeners may ask questions, but effective international engagement is hit or miss.

Now, *JPH* has suggested a next logical step: *Global Consultations on Public Health*. Each international congress is likely to have a local planning and organizing committee. What if that committee, with the help of colleagues in the host country, were to present one or more problems that are particularly challenging, intractable, and demanding of new thinking? Problem descriptions might be distributed to attendees in advance of the congress and dedicated consultations organized during the congress. These consultations would bring together experts in the host country most familiar with the problem or topic and visiting experts eager to learn and share their experiences. Together they would work to analyze the environment – physical and social – plus the epidemiology that describes the health problem. If these consultations work as intended, new ideas would emerge for immediate use and the visiting volunteers would become engaged in a long-term collaboration with colleagues in the host country.

In the last few weeks, we have suggested the idea to our colleagues in Ethiopian Public Health Association who will host the World Congress on Public Health in April 2012 in Addis Ababa. The *Journal* has offered to publish concise problem statements and summary accounts of the consultations.

Our last minute offer may have come too late, as our partners at the World Federation of Public Health Associations and the Ethiopian Public Health Association will be working out details of a global consultation for the first time. Only if they are able to develop the problem statements and circulate them to potentially interested attendees in advance of the meeting can such a consultation move forward.

We are confident that the concept has value. It is possible that the World Federation of Public Health Associations and the Ethiopian Public Health Association may not find a way to undertake this challenging experiment on such short notice. But if not now, given the pace of globalization, we hope someone will assemble the resources and put this concept to the test in the near future.

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