

Editorial on Global Health and Public Health

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Public health and global health are two branches of health-related professions that have similar goals yet diverge in their strategies and methodologies for disease prevention, management and treatment. Both specialties employ professionals engaged in improving the quality of life within communities while also striving for better health outcomes at an individual level.

The differences in the approaches for public health vs. global health are understandable, given the difference in scale of health care. While public health professionals get more involved at a grass-roots level nationally, those in global health focus more on health care problems and policy issues that cross national borders.

Some of the major diseases currently affecting countries around the globe include HIV/AIDS, malaria, Zika, and tuberculosis. Climate change is also an international problem which can affect people's health. Many countries and health organizations are working together and sharing information on these and other health issues.

Public Health

Public health was defined in 1933 as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society” by physician and epidemiologist Sir Donald Acheson, who also served as chief medical officer of the United Kingdom in the late 1900s.

The overall goal of public health is to strengthen health services and reduce inequalities in order to improve and protect the well-being of individuals, communities and populations. To achieve this goal, public health professionals use education and research to promote healthy lifestyles. They also carry out research into diseases and develop treatment programs to counteract the spread of infectious diseases. Public health also promotes the equitable provision of quality health care to all citizens.

Public Health and Its Current Challenges

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the country's federal health protection agency that is tasked with detecting and responding to the spread of infectious diseases. The agency identified and focused on several public health threats in 2017, including the following four:

- **Global health threats:** The CDC viewed the global threats from infectious diseases in a serious light. These diseases included cholera, Ebola, yellow fever, measles, polio and Zika.
- The Zika virus is highly dangerous, especially when contracted by pregnant women. It causes infant mortality and birth defects, such as microcephaly.
- **Antibiotic resistance:** According to a 2016 CDC report, one-third of antibiotic prescriptions are unnecessary and cause antibiotic resistance. The CDC has funded state health departments across the nation to roll out a program for the screening and treatment of antibiotic resistance.
- **Prescription drug overdose:** The agency published new guidelines for prescribing opioids to treat chronic pain. State programs were funded by the CDC to reduce the risk of opioid addiction and overdose.

Global Health and Its Impact on The U.S. Population

Global health focuses on health issues that transcend national borders. The best known of the global health agencies is the World Health Organization (WHO), which manages and coordinates health-related activities for countries around the world. Today, almost no country exists in isolation. The world and its economies are becoming globalized, driving an increase in worldwide commerce and international travel. With these developments have come an increased risk of the spread of infectious diseases, and every country must take steps to protect its citizens.

Protecting The American People

The threats of infectious diseases have given rise to a global health diplomacy initiative by the WHO that brings together professionals in public health, international affairs, management, law and economics. They work to negotiate an agreement for the management of global health to reduce these threats. Global health's role is critical to the security of the American population. Timely identification and control of infectious diseases helps to achieve the following goals:

- Prevent the spread of disease to other countries
- Protect the health of U.S. citizens
- Promote health abroad

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the United States invests \$10.4 billion in global health annually – an increase of 96 percent since 2006, with a view to protecting its population. Improvements in the health of developing countries has a direct effect on the American public health system and provides many benefits. Apart from protecting its people, the U.S. can use benchmarks of success from other countries as a starting point to establishing improved health programs and drive greater collaboration with the global health community.

The success of global health initiatives is only as strong as the efforts by individual countries. With increasing globalization, the interdependency of public and global health is becoming more apparent. At the heart of these initiatives are public health professionals who strive to make the world a safer and healthier place. When considering an education and subsequent career in public health vs. global health, students should take comfort in knowing there is potential for an exciting, rewarding career path no matter which route they choose.