

Delivering on Equity Depends on Us

I am honoured to present this most prescient issue of *World Health and Population*. Focused on *The Global Health Workforce: Striving for Equity Tackling Challenges on the Ground*, my charge to our invited authors was: “present a close-up and candid account of obstacles that confound the effective practice of the health workers on the ground, share your experiences, and recommend workable solutions.” The resulting seven papers from more than 30 authors tell us of healthcare circumstances in more than 50 countries. They describe myriad issues germane and familiar to health workforce challenges: large shortages of health professionals, competency, scope of practice, lack of credentialing and licensure mechanisms for cadres of health workers; maldistribution of the health workforce; protection of health workers; perverse incentives engendered by health systems and their impact on professional practice, access and

costs; and how the lack of health workforce measurement cripples health systems and thwarts population health.

These manuscripts include: an evaluation of multi-sector collaboration in Thailand to promote public health and healthy behaviours (Sopitarchasak et al. 2015); protecting and retaining health workers in civil war-torn Syria (Abbara et al. 2015); the initial report of an innovative continuity based model for health professionals training health professionals in 11 countries (Kerry et al. 2015); a survey of 70 low- and middle-income countries to assess stock, training and credentials of medically trained clinicians, including physician assistants and medical officers (Cobb et al. 2015); one year in, an assessment of Indonesia’s national health insurance system and the contextual HRH challenges (Sciortino and Roy 2015); team-based HIV treatment services using a nurse-led practice model to expand access to services in Namibia

References

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- DeLuca, M.A. and S. Castro Lopes. 2015. “Health Workforce Measurement: Seeking Global Governance and National Accountability.” *World Health & Population* 16(1): 8–23.
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(Wesson et al. 2015); and a global perspective on the mandate for health workforce measurement that calls for a new approach to global governance and national accountability (DeLuca and Castro Lopes 2015).

The issues are familiar; tackling solutions with tenacity and teamwork is less practiced. As we approach the post-2015 era, it cannot be 'business as usual.' Rather, we need new energy and resources to address the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health 2030. And yes, familiar ubiquitous health system issues still need correcting. If history is a predictor of the future, the coming years will present unforeseen population health challenges that will test the capacity, preparedness and resilience of our health workforce and health systems.

We, the global community of stakeholders, get to choose how we move forward. I suggest that we consider three tenants: think out of

the box, accelerate the pace and mobilize untapped resources. We know full well that changing demographics and growing health service demands will challenge already stretched health systems. So, as you consider how to tackle the coming challenges while maximizing resources and drawing on health sciences, I encourage you to read each of the following papers with appreciation of the innovative approaches to familiar challenges. The authors share their insights as they describe how to tackle obstacles large and small. Inspiring, they show us that we get to determine the strength of health systems, now and in the future and ensure that healthcare is firmly rooted in equity for populations, regardless of where they live or who they are.

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