

From the Editors

This issue of *World Health & Population* includes discussion of several compelling and relevant topics, given the current highly politicized climate.

We begin with a thought-provoking piece from Dyer and colleagues (2016), at the US-based Hope through Healing Hands, who discuss the implications of a survey commissioned in 2016 that utilized the same sampling and questions to contrast results with a survey from 2013. The intent was to look at variations in how a politically engaged public, including political and religious conservatives (PRCs), understand and interpret issues around international development and family planning. One of the most striking results was the finding that PRCs now indicate a more positive belief in the relationship between contraceptives, women in developing countries, and saving lives. Dyer et al. (2016) further explored the beliefs of this group towards the language of family planning, and found PRCs are most comfortable with clear and understandable language, such as contraceptives. Based on this finding, the authors offer practical tips and insights on how to discuss and message international family planning when advocating with conservative groups.

Given the current relevance of this discussion, the editors invited several related organizations to respond to the findings presented by Dyer et al. (2016). The first commentary from Huber et al. (2016), at Christian Connections for International Health, agrees that communicating with politically and religiously conservative groups requires careful use of language, and clear

explanations of meaning. They suggest that emphasis on language such as “healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy” resonates with policy makers and reinforces the health impact for women and children.

The second response, by Norman and Mazza (2016), who are from Canada and Australia, respectively, suggests that concerns around the language used when advocating for international family planning may not be a concern outside of the US. They suggest that the bigger challenge globally is the need to establish common understanding around reproductive health issues. They encourage identification of effective, factual communications that support women and their families in achieving their reproductive goals – and ensure improved health, education and prosperity.

The third response comes from Ehlers et al. (2016) at PAI (formerly Population Action International) based in the US. The authors applaud the analysis of Dyer et al. (2016) regarding their work on understanding the perceptions of political and religious conservatives, but take exception to what they perceive as an over emphasis on “healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.” They express concern that this focus does not adequately support the needs and rights of the unmarried, adolescents and youth, survivors of sexual violence or those who do not wish to have children.

Following the discussion on international family planning, we direct your attention to a research paper from Sills et al. (2016), who describe their investigations into the economic impact of unplanned pregnancy following hysteroscopic sterilization, with a specific focus

on the Essure® procedure. Since its introduction in 2002, there has been disagreement about the procedure's efficacy, and no studies had been conducted into the implications when it fails. Using conservative estimates of potential unplanned pregnancies and gross annual income within the cohort of 600,000 women who have received the procedure, the authors suggest the economic cost of the procedure's failure may be as high as \$130 million (US).

The final paper in this issue looks at another issue related to women's health. Khademvatan and colleagues (2016) in Iran report on their research into the relationship between the protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii* and mental health. The researchers found that infected women had significantly lower scores in somatic symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia and depression, compared

with non-infected women. Yet, there were no appreciable differences in these symptoms when comparing infected and non-infected men. The authors conclude that infection with *T. gondii* is a risk factor for women's mental health, and that infection control programs must be developed.

We trust you will find value in these various studies and reports, and look forward to your comments and emails (direct them to dkent@longwoods.com). In the next issue of *World Health & Population*, we will bring you a discussion paper and commentaries that will explore issues related to population consultation as a tool to ensure that local health strategies are oriented towards universal health coverage.

– The Editors

References

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