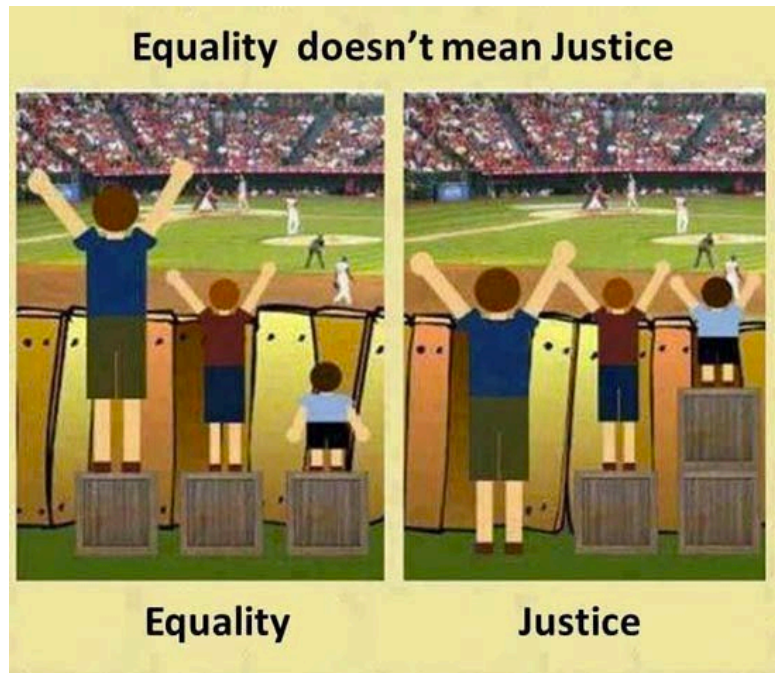


Defining Global Health: NPGH Fogarty Fellow Alumni Essays

Essay 1:

Global health encompasses multiple concepts, derived from public health concepts and international health that were originally based in infectious disease control. However, the definition has evolved due to such factors as global trade, travel, and relations. Additionally, the very inter-disciplinary nature of global health within the context of social, political, environmental, and economic factors constantly shapes the context in which health is attained, maintained, and lost in a world of differential resources, approaches, and beliefs.

At its core, focusing on “health” global health operates under the premise that health (defined as freedom from illness and the achievement of total physical and mental wellbeing) is a social good to be enjoyed by all as a human right is based in the element of justice, above equity. This nuance recognizes that, in order to participate fully in society, inputs to individuals/countries may not necessarily be equal, as some individuals or countries may need more or different resources (see attached photo).



“Global” infers issues of global relevance and global benefit, and not necessarily that an issue must be affecting multiple countries, or crossing boundaries at the time it is deemed a global health concern. This global relevance implies a collaborative approach to solving public health issues where both/all parties are invested in working together for shared public health good, especially when they contribute unique resources... rather than a top-down, or charitable approach. Further, it also recognizes the influential nature of how inter-related countries are... including the political and economic history that define the pathology of disease and lack of well-being in particular settings in order to think about how to achieve real, lasting, and just change with dignity and respect.

Essay 2:

Global Health is an ideal.

As a society we are no longer satisfied with isolated medical and scientific successes in one corner of the globe, if they remain unattainable and inaccessible to the population at large. Global health tackles a large spectrum of challenges, which preclude universal health and social wellbeing, through fostering an academic environment for scholarship and research enabling better understanding of disease burden, so as to generate effective preventive and treatment strategies.

The global in global health refers to the scope of the problems, not their location.

By this definition, global health issues can neither be confined to low and middle-income countries, or underserved populations within the developed world, but rather focus on diseases that threaten welfare, longevity and safety regardless of international boundaries.

Essay 3:

Global health is derived from public health and international health. Global health shares the following characteristics with public health and international health: priority on a population-based and preventive focus; concentration on poorer, vulnerable, and underserved populations; multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches; emphasis on health as a public good and the importance of systems and structures; and the participation of several stakeholders. But the definition of global health is not only a rephrasing of a common definition of public health or a politically correct updating of international health.

Global health emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions, but the “global” in global health refers to the scope of problems, not their location. Thus, global health can focus on domestic health disparities as well as cross-border issues. Besides the infectious diseases and maternal and child health, global health has to embrace the full breadth of important health threats including chronic diseases, injuries, mental health, and the environment. Global health uses the resources, knowledge, and experience of diverse societies to address health challenges throughout the world. Although global health places greater priority on prevention, it also embraces curative, rehabilitative, and other aspects of clinical medicine and the study of basic sciences; it involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and is a synthesis of population based prevention with individual-level clinical care.

In summary, I prefer this definition: global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide.