abstract of

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At the end of this year Peter Piot will step down as head of UNAIDS. After 11 years leading the UN’s joint programme on HIV/AIDS, what will his legacy be? And with a new Executive Director appointed, what will the future hold for UNAIDS? Pam Das and Udani Samarasekera report.

WHO launched its Special Programme on AIDS (later the Global Programme on AIDS; GPA) in 1987, with Jonathan Mann, one of the world’s leading experts on the epidemic, as director. Under his leadership, the programme worked hard to dispel the many myths that existed about HIV/AIDS and to promote a human rights approach to the pandemic.


A global movement to control health-care associated infections, led by WHO, has been gathering pace over the past 3 years. Kelly Morris reviews the measures that are being taken in developed and developing countries to tackle this major threat to patient safety.


60 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid the foundations for the right to the highest attainable standard of health. This right is central to the creation of equitable health systems. We identify some of the right-to-health features of health systems, such as a comprehensive national health plan, and propose 72 indicators that reflect some of these features. We collect globally processed data on these indicators for 194 countries and national data for Ecuador, Mozambique, Peru, Romania, and Sweden.


It has been 30 years since Susan Sontag so powerfully brought to light the metaphorical meanings of illness and the consequences of these meanings for the ways that illness is understood, treated, and most importantly, experienced and lived. Our increasingly complex scientific explanations of illnesses in the past few decades can nevertheless make it easy to overlook how illnesses carry with them equally complex yet underexamined social meanings—including moral judgments—that affect not simply the medical treatment of illness, but the experience of it.


Not many people are fluent in five languages and have worked in places like Kosovo, El Salvador, East Timor, Nauru, and Guatemala, but Swedish-born health and human rights expert Gunilla Backman is one such person. As one of the project leaders of the right to health for health systems report, Backman’s passion for human rights and a desire to help communities in a practical way has led to an unconventional career.
The 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is celebrated in Stories on Human Rights, a collaborative project between the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Office and ART for The World, a non-governmental organisation. Filmmakers of various nationalities made 22 short films exploring the six universal ideals inherent in the Declaration: culture, development, dignity and justice, environment, gender, and participation.

I have trekked in the Sudd swamps of southern Sudan, visited the plains of central Tanzania, and hiked in the Ethiopian highlands of Amhara looking for trachoma. Of these trachoma-hyperendemic settings, southern Sudan conspicuously stands out in a class of its own. The region has been devastated by nearly five decades of civil war and most people live in remote communities with only rudimentary health, educational, and physical infrastructure. Community leaders cite trachoma as a priority health problem—the prevalence of trichiasis and trachomatous-related blindness is alarming.

ARTICLES

Evidence does not support the use of â-blocker therapy for the prevention of perioperative clinical outcomes in patients having non-cardiac surgery. The ACC/AHA guidelines committee should soften their advocacy for this intervention until conclusive evidence is available.

We identified three genetic loci associated with uric acid concentration and gout. A score based on genes with a putative role in renal urate handling showed a substantial risk for gout.

We have not shown a definite difference in outcomes between general and local anaesthesia for carotid surgery. The anaesthetist and surgeon, in consultation with the patient, should decide which anaesthetic technique to use on an individual basis.

Telcagepant 300 mg is effective as an acute treatment for migraine with efficacy comparable to that of zolmitriptan 5 mg, but with fewer associated adverse effects.

Substantial inequalities in HLYs at 50 years exist within EU countries. Our findings suggest that, without major improvements in population health, the target of increasing participation of older people into the labour force will be difficult to meet in all 25 EU countries.

Survey-based DTP3 immunisation coverage has improved more gradually and not to the level suggested by countries’ official reports or WHO and UNICEF estimates. There is an urgent need for independent and contestable monitoring of health indicators in an era of global initiatives that are target-oriented and disburse funds based on performance.

The results show that we can produce a cellular, tissue-engineered airway with mechanical properties that allow normal functioning, and which is free from the risks of rejection. The findings suggest that autologous cells combined with appropriate biomaterials might provide successful treatment for patients with serious clinical disorders.


Multiple courses of antenatal corticosteroids, every 14 days, do not improve preterm-birth outcomes, and are associated with a decreased weight, length, and head circumference at birth. Therefore, this treatment schedule is not recommended.


This study did not show Carraguard’s efficacy in prevention of vaginal transmission of HIV. No safety concerns were recorded.

**HEALTH POLICY**


Global health is attracting an unprecedented level of interest. In this paper, we summarise recent trends and identify the unfinished and new agendas in global public health. We propose a global public health scorecard as a simple way to assess progress and suggest actions by public health practitioners and their organisations for improving the effectiveness of public health. Although we find many recent positive developments in global health, the potential for global cooperation and progress is still largely untapped.

**VIEWPOINT**


In wealthy countries, the focus of clinical care is changing from cure to prevention, to anticipate future diseases in currently healthy individuals. We review the challenges that clinicians face, such as: prevention can cause harm; predicting the benefit of preventive activities for the individual, as opposed to the group, can be difficult; prevention is not of equal value to everyone; and prevention is beginning to take priority over treatment. Clinicians need to be vigilant to avoid colluding with those who have vested interests in some preventive activities.

**CASE REPORT**


In January, 2008, we saw a 25-year-old woman, who had episodes, typically lasting less than 10 s, of feeling light-headed, occasionally nauseous, and suddenly and alarmingly unwell. She sometimes felt faint, and occasionally lost consciousness. She had collapsed on more than one occasion, but had no movements typical of epilepsy. The frequency of her episodes varied considerably; sometimes, she had several episodes a week. Her episodes had begun 10 years previously, and remained unexplained, despite hospital admissions in 2001 and 2007.

Ganly, P., Mohamed Saleem, Helen Marr, Michael Burt, Christopher Florkowski, and Adrienne Williamson. (2008). Not walking or communicating—is all well? The Lancet, 372 (9655), 2086.

In October, 2007, a 24-year-old woman was seen in our internal-medicine clinic. She had Rett’s syndrome, an X-linked neuro developmental disorder, and was brought up by a professional career. Once she became ineligible for paediatric community care, she had no longer received regular specialist review. She was brought to us because she was no longer walking, having learnt to do so at 10 years of age; having been aware of other people, and able to signal basic needs, she was communicating only by brief eye contact with her career.


In April 2006, an 11-month-old girl was playing in a baby-walker, when she fell down 15 stairs. Her parents
heard the noise, and ran to investigate. They saw that the girl had a nosebleed (which lasted less than 1 min), and a small bruise on her forehead. However, she remained fully alert, and did not seem to have sustained any serious injury. Her parents thought she just needed a rest. However, because she appeared increasingly “apathetic”, they changed their minds, and took her to the emergency department of her local hospital: she arrived 1 h after the accident.

LECTURE


William Harvey (1578–1657) was one of a group of 17th century natural philosophers who were no longer prepared to accept the authority of Aristotle, Plato, and Galen as a reliable basis for understanding the natural world. As Harvey himself put it “It is base to receive instructions from others’ comments without examination of the objects themselves, especially as the book of nature lies so open and is so easy of consultation.”1 The introduction of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in the middle of the 20th century, has had a profound effect on the practice of medicine and its essential features are well described.

ESSAY


It was ten in the morning in central Sudan and already blistering hot. We nearly suffocated in our tiny clinic room. One window, no fan, and countless patients with malaria. Physicians interested in working with Dr Catena in central Sudan should contact Hellen Mwangangi at hellen@doe.co.ke. Long-term commitments of 6 months or longer are preferred, but any help would be welcome.