

**FULBRIGHT NEW CENTURY SCHOLARS PROGRAM 2001-2002:
CHALLENGES OF HEALTH IN A BORDERLESS WORLD**

STATEMENT OF THE NEW CENTURY SCHOLARS

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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New Problems, New Program

In our increasingly interdependent world, health is as much a political and economic challenge as a medical and scientific one. Established approaches to understanding health no longer adequately frame the unfolding reality. The Fulbright Scholar Program recognizes that new approaches to scholarly collaboration are needed, and so has created the New Century Scholars program (NCS).

Global Health

We, the first group of New Century Scholars, have now completed a year of work on *Challenges of Health in a Borderless World*—a voyage of discovery for all, involving individual and collaborative research and discussion. Our central task has been to describe and analyze the relationships between globalization and health status, services, and policy, as well as to develop new ways of thinking and acting in this field. The recurring theme in all of our research projects is the interdependence between the global and local forces affecting health. In this statement, we briefly highlight some of our key findings.

Global Threats

Our research confirms that the physical and mental health of the world's people is under threat. Health conditions in many countries are not improving. Disparities among and within nations remain an issue of great concern. Epidemics of communicable and non-communicable diseases continue to spread around the world. More than sixty countries currently struggle with the consequences of mass violence. Globalization increases cross-border traffic in health-threatening risks and sometimes adversely affects key determinants of health throughout the world. Economic policy prescriptions, such as privatization of health care services, often have adverse health consequences. Stigma, discrimination, and marginalization haunt human-rights efforts for health. Environmental degradation is increasing as a serious threat to human health.

Local/Global Flows

Our research illustrates the effects on health of the flow of knowledge, ideas, policies, products, and technologies, as well as identity and cultural practices between the local and the global. Our findings highlight the vulnerability of the local to the global. Local communities experience the effects of globalization in different ways—through resistance and resilience as well as marginalization and alienation. Our analysis shows the importance of respecting local perspectives and traditions on well-being and healing.

Global Governance

Our research highlights how public policy responses to globalized health threats are creating new issues and forms of global health governance. Historically, national and international responses

to health problems involved state agencies (e.g., ministries of health) and intergovernmental organizations (e.g., World Health Organization) that focused on health primarily as a technical, bio-medical challenge. By contrast, global health governance involves not only state and intergovernmental entities but also non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations. The increasing power and influence of actors not traditionally concerned with health represents another new feature of global health. In turn, this transformation requires new arrangements for representation and accountability.

Borderless Research

In the New Century Scholars program, each of us has learned to think and act beyond traditional disciplinary, methodological, political, and cultural boundaries. Our individual research and collective discussions are increasingly borderless as we have come to challenge established academic approaches and preconceptions about health, globalization, and the role of scholarship. The need to move research beyond traditional boundaries mandates new kinds of transnational competence in health research and policy-making.

Enduring Lessons

Although our research has concentrated on new features of health in a globalized world, it also confirms lessons learned in the past. Scholars have documented the devastating effects of poverty and wars on both physical and mental health. Other scholars have stressed the debilitating consequences of the lack of access to primary health care, inadequate public health infrastructure, environmental threats, and violations of ethical principles and human rights. Much of our research exposes health inequities within and among nations and the threat such inequities pose for life expectancies, gender and ethnic equality, and human dignity.

Policy Recommendations

We make the following policy recommendation to governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, private donors, multinational corporations, and local communities. They should assess each policy initiative according to its effects on the key social determinants of health: *poverty, economic and ethnic inequities, violence, war, environmental degradation, and access to health care services and technologies*. Existing policies have not adequately addressed these determinants. New types of economic and social policies are needed to address these social determinants directly.

Global Health Studies

The research we have undertaken and the new knowledge we have generated as New Century Scholars reveal global health studies to be an endeavor of great importance. As old approaches to understanding health protection and promotion give way to new borderless research strategies, we begin to see the patterns, practices, and principles that are rapidly changing the concept and reality of health. The New Century Scholars program has provided us with a scholarly platform from which to assess the scope, speed, and significance of this transformation. Our common challenge is to connect this scholarly enterprise with the problem of crafting and implementing health policy in a globalizing world.

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