

Guest Editorial

The Need for Continued Ethical Scrutiny

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Global disparities in health and the delivery of health services are vast.¹ Disadvantaged peoples' lives go more poorly and they die younger than advantaged people. The root causes are inequitable and transgenerational social inequalities. Is there anything more to say about health and healthcare inequalities? Or is it simply time for action?

To be sure, only action can ameliorate these inequalities. But effective action must translate good evidence into practice. Therefore Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, urged using information about systems and financial issues to understand how to achieve global progress toward universal healthcare coverage.²

Gathering and analyzing empirical evidence about health inequalities is crucial. For example, relevant work reveals how inequities and pejorative attitudes related to (socially constructed) race, ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status adversely affect health and sustain disparities. Always in the background are the demands of ethics: What moral considerations should underlie how to assess evidence? What do they imply? How should these matters be decided?

Indeed there is more to say about ethics and health or healthcare disparities, as these articles confirm. But ultimately, action must follow. We hope these essays will inform and motivate constructive thought and action. Take a look!

Notes

1. World Health Organization. *World Health Statistics 2010* [Internet]. Geneva: WHO Press; 2010, at 12–20; available at <http://www.who.int/publications/en> (last accessed 14 Dec 2011); World Health Organization. *The World Health Report: Health Systems Financing—The Path to Universal Coverage* [Internet]. Geneva: WHO Press; 2010, at 8; available at <http://www.who.int/publications/en> (last accessed 14 Dec 2011).
2. Chan M. Message from the director-general. *The World Health Report: Health Systems Financing—The Path to Universal Coverage* [Internet]. Geneva: WHO Press; 2010, at vi–vii; available at <http://www.who.int/publications/en> (last accessed 14 Dec 2011).