

Position paper on Global Health Education

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1. Introduction

Global Health is the study, research and practice of medicine focused on improving health and achieving health equality for all people in the world. Public and global health education is defined as a field of education that focuses on health problems caused directly or indirectly by national and/or transnational factors. In today's world of increased global connectivity and globalisation, in particular of health emergencies, global health education (GHE) is more important than ever for all health professionals in order to be able to understand the challenges and act accordingly. In Switzerland, public health education is often restricted to the national level and the integration of the global component is essential and inevitable.

2. Call to Action

The Swiss Medical Students' Association (swimsa) recognises Global Health education as a study and research tool for the improvement of the knowledge and skills of health professionals and consequently the improvement of health on a national and international level. It also acknowledges the promotion of research and studies in this field as necessary.

The swimsa is committed to...

1. ...promote Global Health education.
2. ...collaborate with faculties to improve Global Health education.
3. ...be a partner with faculties in establishing and/or improving Global Health education.

The swimsa requests...

...universities and colleges, including medical schools...

1. ...to recognise their role in educating future health professionals on Global Health issues.
2. ...devote part of their education to Global Health.
3. ...promote scientific studies and/or participation in research on Global Health.

...hospitals and health care providers...

1. ...train health professionals with the knowledge and skills to understand Global Health challenges and their impact on health at the individual level.

2. ...establish and promote working environments that are prepared to respond to a health crisis of international origin.
3. ...to recognise their role and impact in managing Global Health issues.

...the Confederation...

1. ... to be a proactive player in global health crisis management and promote cooperation between nations.
2. ...to strengthen national capacities to respond to global health problems.
3. ...to promote the allocation of funds to health services to enable them to be competently equipped and trained in all global health challenges.
4. ... to promote local and international research on issues that impact on global health.

3. Main text

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), public health refers to all organised measures, whether public or private, to prevent disease, promote health and prolong the life of the population as a whole. In contrast, global health includes foreign aid activities, disease control projects and direct medical assistance. As explained earlier, global health was defined by Koplan et al [1] in 2009 as "a field of study, research, and practice that prioritises the improvement of health and the achievement of health equality for all people in the world". It goes beyond national and public health as it extends across borders, requires global and multidisciplinary cooperation and aims at health equity among all nations.

Many definitions have been proposed and the existence of many similar terms overlap in their coverage. The complex and interdisciplinary nature of global health requires a clear definition to enable communication and coordination between different health actors in order to undertake measurable and meaningful actions.

As the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, many health challenges are global and extend across borders as well as institutions. It is in this context that it is important that current and future health professionals are empowered to understand global challenges. [2] An education in global health indirectly provides future health professionals with the necessary skills to care effectively for their patients.

The education of the younger generation on global health topics needs to bring together fields such as social and behavioural sciences, economics, law, biomedical and environmental sciences and public policy to achieve the desired learning outcomes [1]. The most common core issues in global health include a thorough understanding of the global burden of disease and mortality and its relationship to the social determinants of health, the structure of different health systems, the availability of care and the globalisation of health as well as care. [3] Some of the most important challenges in global health are pandemics, climate change, economic inequalities and access to health care, refugee and migration health, antimicrobial resistance, etc. The education of the younger generation on global health topics needs to bring together fields such as social and behavioural sciences, economics, law, biomedical and environmental

sciences and public policy to achieve the desired learning outcomes [1]. The most common core issues in global health include a thorough understanding of the global burden of disease and mortality and its relationship to the social determinants of health, the structure of different health systems, the availability of care and the globalisation of health as well as care. [3] Some of the most important challenges in global health are pandemics, climate change, economic inequalities and access to health care, refugee and migration health, antimicrobial resistance, etc.

Today, global health education trains future health care providers to have a global perspective. When implemented, it aims to familiarise them with the epidemiology and history of diseases and give them access to health resources within different international health systems. It also provides the opportunity to gain a perspective on global health issues, including the balance of social, environmental, organisational and political factors that influence access to care. In addition, it enhances their understanding of diverse cultures, political systems and religions. Finally, the engagement of health care students in international opportunities with other health care providers around the world helps to increase their knowledge and skills in global health in different multicultural populations. At the same time, they are able to explore new career opportunities. Global health education is widely recognised as an opportunity for medical schools to prepare future health care providers, such as medical students, for the health challenges we face now and will inevitably face in the future. Appropriate health programmes also develop students' skills in health policy-making, teamwork and interdisciplinary collaborations. Collectively, these skills make future health professionals effective in the field of global health, provide a deeper understanding of their interactions with patients, and enable them to solve health problems from a systemic perspective. [4]

There have been strong and repeated calls for more integrated global health education by medical students and faculty. [1] Despite this, the structural inclusion of global health education in the medical curriculum remains limited. It is mainly addressed through optional modules or interspersed undergraduate or postgraduate programmes. The structural inclusion of comprehensive health education in the medical curriculum has not yet been achieved in many countries, Switzerland being no exception.

To provide a concrete example of education, a study looks at global health education in different faculties around the world [5]. The training is frequently based on the 5P model of global health education. This is an example of a comprehensive learning framework. The five domains consist of "Equality" which emphasises health fairness as the ultimate goal of global health. "People" which includes the social, economic, cultural and political contributors to health and access to health care for individuals and communities. "Planet" which encompasses various aspects of globalisation and environmental health that affect the health of populations. "Priorities" and "Practices" which covers the values, data and tools used to design, implement and evaluate global health collaborations, policies, programmes and other interventions in countries of all income situations. [6] Universities could work to provide educational opportunities for students and health professionals through lecturers, tutors and instructors from other countries and regions. These educators can transfer their unique perspectives and

experiences while interacting with (future) colleagues and health leaders and by exchanging best practices. [6]

It is also noted that the recent example of a global health crisis, along with climate change and migration, has attracted more students and health professionals to become interested and involved in public and global health issues, leading them to seek relevant courses and degrees. [6] Given the above, there is a need to focus on new public health competences and educational frameworks to ensure adequate preparation for future health emergencies. These competences have already been addressed and described in the European Union's New Competencies Agenda [7] and in the World Health Organisation - Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (WHO-ASPHER) framework [8], paving the way for concrete actions. Some of these are related to global health security, crisis management, agile leadership, emergency risk communication, transparency, responsibility, empathy, mental health burden, collaboration with diverse health professionals and local responses. Topics discussed and better understood include the inseparable link between respect for human rights and global health in this area, and the need for an interprofessional approach to health care delivery and policy development.

The swimsa and through SCOPE, an exchange programme that helps medical students learn about health systems other than their own, is essential to promote cooperation and cultural understanding among future health providers and leaders around the world, which is essential to solving various global health problems. [9] IFMSA exchange programmes include global health learning objectives such as learning about the major health problems and basic epidemiology of the host country and how it differs from their home country. Exploring the medical education system of the host country is another objective among others. [10] The popularity and willingness of medical students to train for clinical rotations abroad demonstrates the increased interest of medical students in learning about different health systems and their desire to become more aware of the health needs of diverse populations and communities worldwide. The swimsa will continue to facilitate global health education opportunities for its members and advocate for their eventual inclusion in medical programmes.

4. References

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