

The global vaccine enterprise

This issue of *International Journal of Health Governance* is devoted to organizational issues and challenges facing vaccination programs. According to the United Nations, vaccination “is second only to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in reducing child deaths” (UNICEF, 2017). It is estimated that vaccinations against childhood diseases such as measles, diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis prevent an estimated two to three million deaths each year (WHO, 2017). Thanks to the efforts of thousands of individuals participating in the worldwide vaccination effort, the last known natural case of smallpox was identified in 1977. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (one of the world’s largest public-private partnerships, composed of national governments, the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) may finally be closing in on the goal of eradication of polio.

Readers of this journal are undoubtedly aware of vaccination activities in their institutions or communities, and many are involved in the organization or support of such activities. Nonetheless, it is likely that few are aware of the organizational complexity of the global vaccine enterprise, which includes public health authorities at every level – global, national, regional, and local; national and supra-national regulatory authorities; national vaccine recommending bodies; professional medical societies (and their associated recommending bodies); vaccine manufacturers; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); research institutions; academic researchers; and other similar entities.

In a single journal issue, we can but sample these activities. We begin with the perspective of a national regulatory authority, the US Food and Drug Administration, and follow with a report from the public health entity charged with developing and implementing vaccination policy in the USA. We next hear from a prominent member of the NGO community devoted to support of the global vaccination effort, and then from one of the “big three” vaccine manufacturers. Our fifth paper, concerning the role of community pharmacists, is representative of the activities of the many professional societies active in immunization efforts. The sixth paper concerns itself with a topic of growing global importance, the hesitancy (or outright refusal) of some parents to allow vaccination of their children. The final two papers explore organizational issues involved in delivery of vaccines within healthcare organizations in a highly developed country (the USA) and a society struggling with conflict and poverty (Afghanistan).

The eight papers included in this issue can only provide a glimpse of the roles and activities involved in the global vaccination enterprise, but it is our hope that they will enrich the readership’s understanding of this topic and prove useful to the readership in their professional activities.

Finally, we would like to offer particular thanks to two renowned Vaccinologists, Professors Walter Orenstein and William Schaffner, who promptly and thoughtfully reviewed every paper considered for this special issue. Without the selfless support of reviewers such as these, this journal could not exist.

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References

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