

FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of *Health and Human Rights* opens a new chapter in the life of the journal. Volume 10, Issue 1, is the first to appear under Paul Farmer's editorship and the first to be published in an open access online format. The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights welcomes a new editorial and technical team to support the journal, along with a new cohort of colleagues who have joined the distinguished ranks of our Editorial Board and Senior Advisory Board.

In presenting this issue, we are delighted to reaffirm connections with the readership of the journal's first decade and to welcome a new public that will discover *HHR* for the first time in our electronic format. In the coming years, we will strive to maintain the impeccable intellectual standards set by the journal's previous editors, Jonathan Mann and Sofia Gruskin, while exploring new directions and engaging new constituencies.

The hallmark of *Health and Human Rights* in this era will be a focus on praxis: exploring how the concepts of human rights can contribute to struggles for well-being by impoverished and oppressed peoples around the world. The journal's mission can be succinctly formulated:

Health and Human Rights is an international journal dedicated to scholarship and praxis that advance health as an issue of fundamental human rights and social justice. It seeks to provide a forum for academics, practitioners, and activists from public health, human rights, and related fields to explore how rights-based approaches to health can be implemented in practice. In so doing, it contributes to fostering a global movement for health and human rights.

Praxis implies a steady, mutually-reinforcing interplay between thought and action. Accordingly, this and each future issue of *Health and Human Rights* will include two synergistic sections. The first, entitled "Critical Concepts," will examine the conceptual foundations of a human rights approach to health through rigorous scholarship. The second, "Health and Human Rights in Practice," provides a forum to analyze challenges and solutions in implementing rights-based approaches to health. These two rubrics will resist the traditional dichotomy between theory and practice, seeking instead to foster engaged scholarship and

reflective activism. In doing so, they will open directions for informed action by and with communities to realize the full spectrum of human rights.

The first several issues of *HHR*'s new series adopt a unified thematic structure that we believe will enhance their contribution to knowledge and action on the right to health. The current issue lays conceptual foundations for subsequent analyses. It asks the questions — deceptively simple — of what a human rights approach to health actually is, and what distinctive value it contributes. Answers come from a diverse group of authoritative contributors. Taken together, these responses provide a probing reflection of the current state of discourse and action on the right to health, illuminating both the promise of rights-based approaches and the challenges still to be confronted.

In recent years there has been increasing consensus around a set of core dimensions of rights-based approaches to health. These dimensions provide the conceptual armature for our forthcoming issues, which will explore: 1) accountability; 2) meaningful participation; 3) non-discrimination and equality; and 4) international assistance and cooperation. These terms are often used in very different ways in the human rights and health fields. Surface consensus on their status as key principles can mask contested questions as to what they might mean in particular contexts. The first cluster of *HHR* issues, therefore, will take up these themes in order to clarify points of conceptual agreement, together with critical disputes and their implications. Each issue will highlight both challenges and successful strategies for pursuing rights-based approaches in practice. All readers are warmly invited to visit the journal website for details about publication dates and submissions deadlines.

HHR is committed to bringing into our pages the experiences and analyses of frontline human rights practitioners, activists, community organizers, and others who may previously have had limited opportunities to publish in academic journals. Our editors are happy to work intensively with authors who have important experiences and knowledge to transmit but who may be less familiar with the conventions of scholarly prose. We also encourage inquiries and article submissions in languages other than English. While our capacities in this regard are currently limited, we hope in the future

to publish an increasing number of texts translated into English from other languages, and eventually to make the original-language versions of these articles available through our website.

The philosophy underlying *HHR*'s move to an open access electronic publishing format is eloquently set out in this issue by Gavin Yamey. In embracing the open access model, *HHR* aligns itself with a global movement for the democratization of scientific knowledge production and a more equitable distribution of the benefits of science, particularly in health. *HHR*'s distinctive contribution to this movement will come through the journal's systematic linking of conceptual and legal human rights analysis with documentation of concrete, front-line experiences translating rights principles into social change and health progress on the ground.

HHR's new electronic format offers resources to expand and accelerate knowledge-sharing on the right to health, making this communication increasingly multi-directional and participatory. Readers who register on the website will be able to post their comments on specific passages of published articles. By registering, readers can also receive further information and contacts from the journal's editors, so that the conversation can expand. Discussion of relevant issues will deepen through the journal's blog. The blog incorporates photographs, video, and other multimedia resources to enhance our understanding of the stakes of rights failures and successes, the challenges that practitioners and communities face, and the creative solutions being deployed to advance the right to health on multiple levels, including policy-making, program implementation, advocacy, and community mobilization. The blog will feature information on selected conferences, events, campaigns, and actions relevant to health and human rights.

In addition to core articles to appear in the print version of the journal, the *HHR* website (<http://www.hhrjournal.org>) showcases a section of "Perspectives": web-only features, including policy analyses, issue briefs, and advocacy documents, as well as invited opinion pieces and short essays aimed to stimulate debate on health and rights. Over time, the website will also provide links, not only to other online journals and information resources, but to emergent spaces in which communities of practice are organizing to strengthen peer-to-peer learning among practitioners in rights-based health program design

and service delivery (for example, the Global Health Delivery Project at Harvard University). Our hope is that the effect ultimately generated by these interactive features will be a qualitative change in how readers relate to and use *Health and Human Rights*. Increasingly, knowledge-sharing through the journal platform will be "horizontal" and collaborative in character, with readers engaged in defining the questions to be pursued and evaluating the evidence brought forward.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the colleagues who have provided advice and support during *HHR*'s move to its new format, helping us overcome a range of technical and administrative challenges. We are especially grateful to Gavin Yamey of the Public Library of Science (*PLoS*) journals for his tireless creative energy and expert guidance on a wide range of topics. Warm thanks also go to Claire Kendall and her colleagues at *Open Medicine*; Matthew Anderson of *Social Medicine*; Gunther Eysenbach, Editor and Publisher of the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*; and the innovative community connected with the Public Knowledge Project and Open Journal Systems, in particular, John Willinsky and M. J. Suhonos. The *HHR* editorial core team has benefited from the generous assistance of colleagues at Partners In Health, the Harvard School of Public Health, and the Division of Social Medicine and Health Inequalities (now the Division of Global Health Equity) of the Brigham and Women's Hospital, in particular, Andrew Marx and Linea Rowe. We are exceptionally grateful to Sofia Gruskin and her editorial and administrative team, who took pains to ensure a smooth transition process.

As we move forward, the success of *Health and Human Rights* will be measured by the degree to which people working to realize health rights in settings of adversity find *HHR* an enabling resource for their work. We invite our expanding community of readers to join actively in shaping the journal's content and presentation in the years ahead, so that, collectively, we can maximize the publication's usefulness in the field.

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