

BOOK REVIEW

Preparing the Next Generation to Advance Human Rights in Global Health

PAUL HUNT

Foundations of Global Health and Human Rights, edited by Lawrence O. Gostin and Benjamin Mason Meier, Oxford University Press, 2020.

Over the last 25 years, the *Health and Human Rights Journal* has brought together the field of human rights and global health. This field has affected public health practice and global health governance.¹ Out of advocacy in the early years of the AIDS response arose an academic discipline, and courses in health and human rights have since sprung up throughout the world. Yet our field has never before had a foundational text to introduce students and practitioners to its basic tenets. *Foundations of Global Health and Human Rights* seeks to provide this necessary academic foundation, offering an educational tool for the next generation of human rights advocates to advance global health.

Human rights education is crucial to health policy, research, and advocacy. With a shared understanding of human rights norms and principles, students and practitioners alike can be empowered to participate in and challenge the systems that seek to drive rights realization. Human rights has too long been the sole purview of lawyers. Health professionals and practitioners need to be engaged in this work, and new educational resources can support their interdisciplinary involvement. Human rights education that provides tools for health professionals to engage with human rights will help ensure that rights become more than just rhetorical promises.² This textbook offers an authoritative educational resource for teaching in the field, providing a basis for harmonizing instructional methods and accelerating health and human rights education.

Foundations of Global Health and Human Rights reviews the inextricable linkages between health and human rights and the policy applications of human rights in global health. This new textbook is the first scholarly text to be developed with an explicit educational purpose, bringing together 38 leaders in the field to develop a foundation for teaching. Edited by Lawrence Gostin and Benjamin Meier, whose previous book *Human Rights in Global Health: Rights-Based Governance for a Globalizing World* compared international organizations in global health governance, this new Oxford University Press volume shares their vision of the academic field of health and human rights and the promise of human rights in global health education. With a stirring foreword by World Health Organization Director-General Tedros, who implores young people to “secure the future of global health and human rights, learning from the past to build a hopeful future,” this textbook seeks to provide an essential foundation for that future.

PAUL HUNT is New Zealand's Chief Human Rights Commissioner and former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Over the course of 20 chapters, *Foundations of Global Health and Human Rights* offers a magisterial examination of the field, systematically exploring the development, implementation, and application of human rights for global health. The opening section outlines the norms and principles of the field, the role of global health law, and the centrality of the right to health. From this overview of the development of human rights under international law as a basis for public health, the next section seeks to “bring human rights home”—detailing the implementation and accountability mechanisms necessary to make human rights real in people’s lives. The third section applies the development and implementation of human rights to contemporary health-related human rights challenges—from communicable and noncommunicable diseases to a focus on water, sanitation, hygiene, mental health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Looking into the future, the fourth section analyzes rising human rights challenges in a rapidly globalizing world, from international trade to climate change. In recognizing the challenges of the present moment, the book ends by examining the existential threat of populist nationalism to global health and human rights. Reflecting on these challenges, the afterword shifts to a more personal tone, addressing students directly and providing advice for maintaining resilience in these difficult times.

This textbook will find wide application in teaching across schools of law, public health, global studies, and public policy. As a textbook, the chapters are intended to be read sequentially, with each chapter building from the previous one while adding new understanding of the field. Given the number of contributors and topics, it is inspiring that the editors have crafted a volume that reads as a single coherent text rather than a series of distinct individual contributions. This rich combination of contributors can be attributed to the consistent structure across chapters, with each chapter reviewing the historical evolution, current state, and forward-looking areas of a distinct subfield. To facilitate the use of this book in the classroom, every chapter includes three detailed case studies that

highlight practical applications of human rights in global health. Prompting further engagement, each chapter is followed by questions for student consideration and classroom discussion. This textbook design succeeds in providing an educational foundation for the field, creating a resource for new courses, and supporting a range of multidisciplinary instructors in teaching students the necessary skills for advocacy, research, and practice in health and human rights.

With the field now facing existential challenges, this textbook is more necessary than ever before. The health and human rights movement could unite the world, but the current age of populist nationalism has challenged assumptions about the overarching importance of human rights in global health.³ Recognizing these governance challenges amidst a cataclysmic pandemic, *Foundations of Global Health and Human Rights* looks to the next generation to reinvigorate the commitment to universal rights in global health. We have come so far in developing, implementing, and advancing human rights in global health. Human rights education will be the key to a future for global health with justice.

References

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