
Challenge Of The World Order And It's Implications For Health Personnel

S Mirzaei, P Knoll

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Abstract

There is a link between health and peace, which non-governmental medical organisations have been trying for years to forge, including amnesty international medical groups, Physicians for Human Rights, and the World Health Organisation. When the rights and dignity of people are undermined, there is an implication for the health of the community and for the responsibilities of its health workers.

These efforts need to be supported in a more fundamental way. What is seen as the unfolding “new world order” can stimulate fresh thinking on a variety of important issues. As predicted by the Global Burden of Disease Study (1), war will be one of the 10 most important causes of loss of disability-adjusted life-years by the year 2020.

We would propose, that institutionalized partnerships be established between NGO's such as those mentioned above and individual medical societies to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and recognition of societies at risk of instability

and violence. Further, a representative for human rights with political immunity should be established in every national physicians' chamber, with regular reports to the World Medical Association. That health workers can uniquely make this contribution to peace-making is a point on which we agree most warmly with MacQueen (2).

Finally, it should be taken for granted that the training of physicians include a serious study of ethics and human rights, as well as acquisition of the skills to deal with conflict and the therapeutic implications of trauma, both physical and mental.

References

1. Alternative projections of mortality and disability by cause 1990-2020: Global Burden of Disease Study. Lancet. 1997 ;349:1498-504.
2. MacQueen G, Santa-Barbara J, Neufeld V, Yusuf S, Horton R. Health and peace: time for a new discipline. Lancet. 2001;357:1460-1.

Author Information

Siroos Mirzaei

Institute of Nuclear Medicine, Wilhelminenspital & Hemayat-Organisation For Support Of Survivors Of War And Torture
(www.hemayat.org)

Peter Knoll

Institute of Nuclear Medicine, Wilhelminenspital