



# EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

## EDITORIAL

# World Health Day and *Education for Health*

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Looking back on April 7th and World Health Day (WHD) 2008, which marks the date of the original funding of the World Health Organization, we think it is fitting to consider *Education for Health (EfH)* in the context of this event. Each year WHD focuses attention on a particular subject of importance to global health. Past topics have included mental health, road safety and people working together for health.

This year's WHD theme was "Protecting Health from Climate Change." Its goals included: raising awareness and public understanding of the global and local health consequences of climate change; advocating for interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships, both locally and internationally, to improve health through timely strategies to stabilize climate change; and bolstering the healthcare community's role in meeting the health challenges of climate change, whether locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.

World Health Day reiterates the defining principles of the 1978 Alma Alta Declaration:

"...health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right and that **the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector** (emphasis added)."

Strategies identified and reinforced through WHD activities include raising awareness and public understanding, advocating for interdisciplinary partnerships, and focusing on health at multiple geopolitical levels.



World Health Day, despite its name, is not an event widely known and honored. But it is important that the spirit of the day, if not the day itself, continues to grow through awareness, education and dissemination.

The themes of WHD are contained in the mission of *Education for Health* and are reflected in the descriptions of three of the five article foci we look for at *EfH*, specifically articles that:

- describe and evaluate *collaborations* between academia and health service organizations designed to promote community health
- address *multi- and interdisciplinary approaches* to health professions education and service delivery
- address models and systems of education, research, and service delivery that *link developing and developed countries*

In this issue of *Education for Health*, the meaning behind WHD is captured in research and program descriptions addressing issues like preparation of a psychiatry workforce in the developing world, planning and maintaining a community-based curriculum, and integrating medical education and public health. This issue of *EfH* also continues to highlight important work from across the world, including Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Sudan, Turkey, and the United States.

As Charles Boelen, featured in this issue's "Making a Difference" interview, states:

I have been struck by the necessity to adopt a system approach to ensure sustainable achievements in people's health. It became obvious that narrow and specialized interventions would not suffice. In contrast, the alliance of different forces and talents in different sectors was imperative. In short, I discovered what "health" meant: how it was closely linked to literacy, culture, social and economic opportunities. I was mutating from the status of a medical professional to the status of a health professional!

World Health Day and *Education for Health* seek to promote this mutation from "medical" to "health" thinking broadly among healthcare workers and others concerned about people's health.

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