

**NOTICE TO READERS:** The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* was created by WHO as a forum for public health experts to publish their findings, express their views and engage a wider audience on critical public health issues of the day. Consequently, *the views expressed by the writers in these pages do not necessarily represent the views of WHO.*

## INCREASE GLOBAL PRODUCTIVITY BY GIVING EYEGLASSES TO ALL IN NEED

**GENEVA** -- Huge economic gains could be made if eyeglasses were provided to approximately 150 million people in need, according to research published today in the international public health journal, the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*.

Researchers estimate that the global productivity loss due to uncorrected visual impairment in people aged 16 to 50 years is \$121.4 billion.<sup>1</sup>

"If each affected person was provided with appropriate eyeglasses, we estimate that there may be a net economic gain, even if up to \$1000 was spent per person to do this," says Dr Tasanee Smith, from the Bloomberg School of Public Health (USA), who worked with researchers from the International Centre for Eyecare Education (Australia) and Africa Vision Research Institute (South Africa).

"The true cost of providing eyeglasses to meet this global burden is unknown," she says. "Eyeglasses are a low-cost intervention, however, many less economically developed countries lack basic infrastructure for distribution and training and have insufficient equipment and personnel to provide eyeglasses to those in need."

<sup>1</sup> All currencies noted above are in international dollars, a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power that the US dollar had in the United States at a given point in time.

Read the research paper here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/6/08-055673.pdf>

The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* is one of the world's leading public health journals. It is the flagship periodical of the World Health Organization, with a special focus on developing countries.

Further items in this *Bulletin* issue include:

- An exclusive interview on the H1N1 influenza outbreak with Dr Harvey F Fineberg, president of the Institute of Medicine, USA, and co-author of *The epidemic that never was*, an analysis of the controversial response to the 1976 swine flu outbreak.
- How mental health experts are helping the survivors, particularly children, rebuild their lives after recent conflict in the Gaza Strip.

- An Indonesian study reveals that high numbers of women die while giving birth at home, even when assisted by midwives.
- An editorial calls attention to the neglected health and rights of women in prison
- Childhood exposure to violence has a strong influence on future health decisions.
- Study exposes critical knowledge gaps in mental health research
- Effective treatment of scabies, a parasitic infection that affects as many as 300 million people worldwide, for less than US\$0.20 per person, demonstrated by a study done in Senegal.

The *Bulletin's* table of contents can be found at:

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/6/en/index.html>

The complete content of the *Bulletin*, since 1948, is now available free to all readers worldwide through PubMed Central, available at:

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/tocrender.fcgi?journal=522&action=archive>

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