

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.*

WHY DO SOME HEALTH ISSUES ATTRACT ALL THE ATTENTION AND MONEY?

GENEVA – Political leaders, donors and civil society prioritize some health issues and neglect others because of the way these issues are communicated, according to a paper published today in the international public health journal, the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*.

Professor Jeremy Shiffman, from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University in the United States of America, suggests that the success or failure of a global health issue to attract funding and attention has more to do with how the issue is portrayed and communicated than with how “important” it actually is.

“In the early 2000s, HIV/AIDS received more than one-third of all major donor funding for health, despite representing only around 5% of the mortality and morbidity burden in low- and middle-income countries. Also, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) attracted enormous resources despite causing the deaths of only several hundred people,” Shiffman says. “Meanwhile, other communicable diseases, such as pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases, that kill millions of people each year – and for which cost-effective interventions exist – attract minimal donor resources.”

He suggests that communities may be more effective in raising funds and attracting attention if they make the case that their issue is not only a public health problem but a fundamental threat to human well-being, national security and/or economic development.

Read the research paper here: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/8/08-060749.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. Research papers are peer reviewed and are independent of WHO recommendations and guidelines.

Further items in this *Bulletin* theme issue on public health communication include:

- Interview with Shereen Usdin, co-founder of Soul City Institute in South Africa.
- Why direct-to-consumer advertising of drugs is a controversial issue.
- How mobile phones were used to report infectious diseases after the earthquake in Sichuan, China.
- Sun worshippers, beware: skin cancer awareness campaigns in Australia and Brazil.
- Gruesome images on cigarette packages are changing smokers’ behaviour.

- Communication strategies in polio eradication.
- Are health messages reaching refugees?
- How a fatal car crash triggered a life-saving initiative in the Russian Federation.
- Round table discussion on the importance of open access to health research.
- The dangerous practice of mixing drugs for children in Indonesia.
- Communicating risk in a disease outbreak.

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

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/8/en/index.html>

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