



11th Annual Maastricht Symposium on Global Health

Realising Health Equity: Decolonising and Pluriversifying Global Health

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on
Global Health
**Realising health equity:
Decolonising and Pluriversifying Global Health**

Thursday, October 14th, 2021

10.00a.m. - 18.00p.m.

Location: Maastricht University, Universiteitssingel 40, Maastricht

Admission fee: free

With the introduction of Global Health as an academic field around fifteen years ago, there were great ambitions to turn the historically hierarchical relationship between “North” and “South” into one of more equal collaboration. Within Global Health, it was understood that in a rapidly globalizing world, where the multi-dimensional nature of health threats has become even more complex and borders of nations, regions and continents are transcended increasingly, tackling health inequities was no longer a matter of supporting the most vulnerable. As root causes for health inequity are highly interrelated with the geopolitical and economic global landscape, they can only be tackled by collaborative effort from all stakeholders.

Global Health has now become an established field with its own Master’s and Ph.D. programs, peer-reviewed journals, and research funding. Nevertheless, while the field is increasingly gaining recognition, fundamental critiques about extent to which Global Health has realised its ambition and its contributions to health equity is becoming stronger. Global Health practices rather seem to reproduce neo-colonial hegemonies instead of turning hierarchical relationships into collaborations. It becomes more and more apparent how deep inequality is rooted in the institutional landscapes of politics, the economy and science itself, and how little is done to bring about fundamental change. Where we may argue that changing the geopolitical and economic landscape is beyond the scope of an academic discipline, the way scientific Global Health institutions themselves contribute to neo-colonial hegemonies must lead to a thorough reflection on Global Health education, science, and practice.

The conceptualisations and definitions of Global Health, as well as global standards for its content and quality, reflect a Western-centric imaginary of the world system and a western conceptualisation of humanity and human health, as a consequence of the fact that the dominant voices in the field have tended to come from the “West”. Linked to an ontology and epistemology that implies universality, these conceptualisations are presented and framed as objective truth, ignoring their historical situatedness and discarding other paradigms and the value of diverse knowledges. This Western-centric imaginary is constantly reproduced, because access to research funding and publication practice and approval of programs is limited to those that fit into these supposed universal quality norms and standards. However, the call for “pluriversity” in Global Health and decolonising knowledge is becoming stronger, and it is imperative that we realise Global Health’s ambitions to tackle global health inequities.

This discussion on decolonising global health is the topic of the 11th Annual Maastricht Symposium on Global Health. Our guest speakers, with backgrounds in research, policymaking, and NGO work will provide insight on this complex topic from a range of perspectives, and the symposium will provide an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and solutions. The keynote lectures will be provided by Dr. Eugene Richardson (Harvard Medical School, Boston, US), and Professor Kehinde Andrews (Birmingham City University, UK). Further contributors to this symposium will be Dr. Clara Affun-Adegbulu (Institute of Tropical Medicine, University of Antwerp, Belgium); Dr. Sylvia Sax (co-founder and health program coordinator of Yarrow Global Consulting, Germany).

This event, organised by Maastricht University, will be held in a hybrid format. Current Global Health students at Maastricht University will attend in person. All other participants will be able to attend online only.

Information: ghsymposium@maastrichtuniversity.nl

registration: [Registration](#)