

for two of the chronic diseases in the roadmap has no apparent relation to the development status of a country. To illustrate the lack of ethnic based variability in the average systolic blood pressure measurements,⁸ countries in Africa (which have a comparatively homogenous black population³), were plotted as open circles.

It could be argued that the human development index is a lagging measure and thus obfuscates a correlation because of recent development efforts. To address this potential discrepancy, the number of new tuberculosis infections and average systolic blood pressure were examined in relation to the average total spending on health care per person per year (fig 1D and 1E). These relations were similar to the values for the human development index.

The intention to reduce the global chronic disease burden is noble and these data support the claim that chronic disease is not correlated with affluence.⁹ Furthermore, these data suggest that typical development schemes, which aim to drive up the human development index, are likely to be effective for infectious diseases, but not effective in reducing the burden of chronic disease.

As developed countries will have the largest percentage increase in chronic

disease,⁹ and a marker for chronic diseases is independent of the development status of a country, why focus efforts to reduce chronic disease on less developed countries? The countries with a higher human development index support a more developed infrastructure, and permit a more cost effective implementation of the proposed chronic disease roadmap. For example, it would be easier to coordinate efforts in countries such as Germany (HDI = 0.925; average systolic blood pressure = 132) than in countries such as Kenya (HDI = 0.488; average systolic blood pressure = 113). Certainly this approach does not have the same altruistic impact as "saving" poorer countries. However, through the increased cost effectiveness of working in more developed countries, there would be a greater chance of reaching the goal of reducing the global burden of chronic disease by 2%.

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THE JECH GALLERY

Loving culture for a better life

Cultural liberties are an important tool for human development.¹ A wide approach to development cannot forget this human right. However, ethnicity continues to be a reason for social exclusion.² Moreover, a lot of groups are suffering a kind of exclusion based in their way of life.¹ Cultural neo-colonialism acts in the countries themselves and between them. But perhaps, one of the most important aspects to increase peace is to promote multicultural democracies. The degree of cultural representation could contribute to achieving more equity in power. Also to respect the personal and communitarian identity, people's own beliefs and the way to express them. The policies addressed to the improvement of people's health and life should necessarily include the cultural dimension.

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Popular welcome in an environmental school. Varela, San Domingos, Guinea Bissau.

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