
In this number

New century, new challenges

Our first edition of the year 2000 starts with an account from John Wyn Owen on the challenges for public health we will face in the near future. Although centred on the British scene its main ideas apply as well for other countries: the forces of globalisation will shape, and are shaping our health profile. Public health needs to develop urgently a new practice able to overcome the mismatch between global risk and an extremely parochial practice.

Committed with the need to create a new knowledge base for the public health of the new century this number is more global than usual. Our readers will find a report on the humanitarian crisis of North Kivu (Democratic Republic of Congo), asking if nutritional relief was properly targeted. Also a paper from Lebanon tackles the need for better measurement of war injuries during the "Grapes of Wrath" attack in 1996. Both papers show the need for more scientific knowledge to adequately tackle acute public health crises.

Another globalisation related public health issue such as climate changes and its impact on vectors ecosystems is presented in a short paper from Australia. Dr Peng Bi and colleagues studied the transmission of the Barmah Forest

virus infection in Queensland, Australia in relation with the El Nino-Southern oscillations. They conclude that "the BFV infection will be an increasing public health problem in mainland Australia, and possibly in the wider Australasian region".

The century of globalisation will have also a tremendous impact in the way we communicate scientific knowledge among the scientific community and with the general public. From this month a new system called Central Pub Med will operate from the US National Library expanding the well known services of Med-Line and Pub Med to full text papers both from peer review journals and to a new space without the filter of peer reviewing. This will have major implications for public health research. Our pages will remain open to ideas and debates on how Central Pub Med will affect the way we have been working during the past century. Also we are pleased to announce that in accordance with the times in which we live the journal will be fully on line this year.

CARLOS ALVAREZ-DARDET
Editor