

## Why publishing the Journal of Public Health in Africa

The population of sub-Saharan Africa faces global health challenges more than any other part of the world, bearing the brunt of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS. This region already carries 24% of the global disease burden and the situation is made worst by the advent of non-communicable diseases, such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, cancer and diabetes (just to name a few). Thus the need for African scientists to disseminate research data in order to alleviate the continent's huge disease burden and help the frail health systems affected by poverty, under-development, conflicts and poorly managed government agencies.

In our opinion, the *Journal of Public Health in Africa* responds to the need for a communication system aimed at reaching the widest audience of professionals worldwide in a shorter time than traditional publishing.

The *Journal of Public Health in Africa* is a peer-reviewed, online-only, Open-Access journal that focuses on health issues in the African continent and offers a platform for the dissemination of research data. The journal editors seek high-quality original articles on public health related issues, reviews, comments and more. The aim of the journal is to move public health discourse from the background to the forefront. The success of Africa's struggle against the huge disease burden that undermined the African society depends on public health approaches.

This editorial – the first of 2017 – briefly responds to the simple question: “Why are we publishing the Journal of Public Health in Africa?” To give a proper answer, as the Editor-in-Chief and Deputy Editor of the journal, we would like to stress 3 points.

1) Worldwide there are many journals on public health and this could be explained by the fact that this is a multidisciplinary branch associated with local factors, social elements and geographic determinants. Research articles related to public health in Africa are often published on these journals; however, we would like to go beyond the mere publication, since we are interested in creating a platform and a community dealing with the most important approaches needed to improve the public health in Africa, which has been defined by the World Health Organization as *a state of*

*complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*

The recent success of JPHiA, which has been indexed in PubMed and PubMed Central, is a key element for the global dissemination of research and practice of public health in Africa, that demonstrates the increasing interest in this field. We can therefore expect a further growth of the journal in the forthcoming years, basing on the increasing quantity and quality of research conducted by Universities, Public Health Ministries and Medical Research Centers in Africa.

2) The concept of responsible research and innovation (R&I) in public health aims at better aligning the processes and outcomes of R&I with the values, needs and expectations of African society, and at ensuring that the various stakeholders work together during the whole process. Research and innovation therefore cannot be separate from the social, political and economic context.

Moreover, public health is an active component in the progress of the African society, which is undergoing a great change in terms of development of human resources, infrastructures, products and procedures. Unfortunately, the strong presence of communicable and non-communicable diseases in Africa is a great obstacle for this development. However, it is our belief that public health could play a major role in the control of morbidity and mortality in the African region. The increasing connection between research and society could enable the public health sector to address the key development problems in Africa and to exploit its innovation and competitiveness in the global market.

Important issues related to R&I are:

- *Public engagement*: promoting the engagement of all the stakeholders – including researchers, citizens, policy makers, business companies and industries – in the research and innovation of public health process;
- *Gender*: favoring gender equality within health institutions, research and innovation content;
- *Education*: enhancing the current education process in order to provide future researchers and other social actors with new capacities of taking responsibility in R&I process, and educate children, youth and their parents to hygiene, vaccination practice and so on;
- *Open Access*: making research practice and innovation transparent and easily and widely accessible;

Correspondence: Vittorio Colizzi, “Chantal Biya” International Reference Centre for Research on the Prevention and Management of HIV/AIDS, (CIRCB), Yaoundé, Cameroon. E-mail: vittorio.colizzi@publichealthinfrica.org

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- *Ethics*: making research, practice and innovation respectful of the fundamental rights and ethical standards.

3) The last point is related to the strict correlation between research and practice in public health. This could be achieved through: the setting of public health research priorities, the development of health services research, the maintenance of scientific and ethical standards in research (codes of conduct), the strengthening of institutional capacity, the financing of public health research, and finally through the knowledge brokering, which is the operational linkage between research institutions and policy-makers that optimizes the translation of research findings to policy.

The expressions of applied research, technology transfer and translational medicine are a deep part of the public health core-business. The gap existing between scientific discovery (vaccines, drugs, medical devices, natural products, procedures, etc.), its application and the trade marketing need to be filled in Africa, and this requires a common contribution from all the African people involved in every-day public health activity.

Finally, we would like to invite all the African people involved in public health activities to take part in this project of creating a public health community and to use this journal as a valid instrument to disseminate knowledge. It is our belief that the strength of this journal will greatly depend on your active involvement.

We are looking forward to receiving your submission.

Vittorio Colizzi, Editor-in-Chief  
Nelson Sonela, Deputy Editor