

RESPICE, ADSPICE, PROSPICE ¹

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No amount of development of health manpower, health organization, or health techniques can be truly effective without improvement in health knowledge of the public.

On the great seal of the College of the City of New York there appears a three-headed figure with a Latin legend that is particularly apt for an academic institution: *Respice, Adspice, Prospice*. The figure and legend apply equally well to the continuing task of public health—to learn from the past, to confront the present, to do better in the future. Given this broad context one can hardly project the state of international health at the beginning of the next century, without taking into consideration the framework of the past and present.

The beginnings of health concern and collaboration across national borders revolved about the protection of the peoples of various individual nations against dangers and diseases which might be brought to them from other countries. Only in the twentieth century was concern extended to broader concepts leading, for example, to cooperation in attacking environmental problems, strengthening national and local health services, improving educational institutions and techniques for preparing health personnel, fostering collaborative research, broadening exchange of scientific information. The countries of the Americas can take particular pride in having led the world in demonstrating how an effective, truly international organization could be built and supported.

One may safely say today that almost all nations, individually and collectively, recognize that it is their responsibility, as well as

in their own enlightened self-interest, to help in the collection and dissemination of epidemiologic, demographic, and other types of data relevant to public health, and to participate actively in the exchange of technical and material assistance among the countries of the world.

The preamble of the Constitution of the World Health Organization is a remarkably comprehensive and universal document in setting a broad frame of reference for international health. In the preamble's bold and simple statement that the health of each nation is of importance to all nations, in its recognition that health is essential for peace, in its assertion that health is a human right and not a privilege dependent on particular status or resources, permanent goals are set for mankind. Written a quarter century ago, this preamble, these concepts, these goals, will be as true and important in the year 2000 as they are today.

Both the need and difficulty of future assessments are highlighted by current problems in many areas of health interest, notably in ecology. Each grand design for a water supply or for construction of a mass transportation system has health implications that have to be dealt with on a hypothetical, presumptive basis because the actuality cannot be tested for many years or even decades. Nevertheless, despite such difficulties, attempts to predict the health effects of community or individual actions must be a way of life. The validity of these predictions will increase in direct proportion to the completeness and accuracy of the information on

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which they are based and in the objectivity with which the various factors are assessed.

Some of the difficulties in the predictive process are reflected in the early abandonment of the decision of the First World Health Assembly to assign "top priority" to certain subjects, specified originally as malaria, maternal and child health, tuberculosis, venereal diseases, nutrition, and environmental sanitation. It very soon became apparent that such a classification was not helpful, in view of the great diversity around the world and the unpredictability and irregularity of temporal change in a given situation in a particular country. To be sure, all six of these problems still constitute major preoccupations for most of the world's population. Even in a country like the United States of America four and possibly five of the six are still substantial public health problems, at least for defined segments of the population.

In the 25 years since the Interim Commission first considered program priorities, there have been great changes in health conditions in many countries. In some areas, there has been impressive and almost universal progress. Millions of persons formerly living constantly with endemic malaria are now essentially free of this scourge. Smallpox incidence has dropped dramatically in the Hemisphere—to a mere 19 cases in 1971, all of them in a single country—and other diseases, such as measles, diphtheria, and whooping cough are far less prevalent in some countries.

What is not always appreciated is that in certain instances the differences between countries with the best and with the poorest records have become even greater. As the more affluent countries have had striking reductions in infant mortality, to levels which might not have been thought possible a generation ago, there are still populous regions of the world where half the babies born do not live to their 5th birthday. Environmental problems have also reflected extremes. Many more communities now have acceptable water supplies but in the "well-

sanitized" countries technological progress has been accompanied by unforeseen ecologic disturbances. To put it in apparently contradictory terms, things are getting worse as things are getting better.

An encouraging sign is the increase in international collaboration for health which has been steady and of considerable dimension in the past 25 years. For example, the First World Health Assembly adopted a regular program and budget of \$4.7 million, while the Twenty-Fifth Assembly will consider an effective working budget of \$90,000,000, to which must be added great expansion in other funds directly or indirectly expended for world health. Many believe that still faster growth in program and budget was possible and the results would have been much more productive. The demonstrated effectiveness of what has been accomplished is testimony for this point of view.

Against this background what are likely to be the problems at the beginning of the next century? Surely the preamble of the Constitution of the World Health Organization will have become even more vital with greater recognition that health is more than the absence of disease and infirmity. Attention to health aspects of the environment will hopefully have paralleled the general increase in public concern for ecology. If the advice of health experts is utilized to a far greater extent than at present, this should foster a better and healthier life. The monumental world-wide needs for adequate water supply and acceptable housing may be reduced quantitatively but the residue will be far greater than any accomplishment foreseeable at present. Major research needs to be done in the economic and technical development area, for the health benefits of adequate water and housing are well understood. By contrast we know far too little of the balance between benefit and danger of pesticides. Pollution of the air by gases, by particulate matter, and by ionizing radiation needs far more quantitative as well as qualitative evaluation.

Greater control of the biological environment has been one of the triumphs of public health and is likely to progress at an even faster pace. This very progress, however, brings with it its own dangers, likely to be exaggerated in coming years. Even now, there is a kind of smug acceptance that low rates of infectious disease will continue indefinitely and there is corresponding negligence of the kind of vigilance necessary to maintain control. With further and more widespread progress will come even greater danger and correspondingly greater need for effective health organization and surveillance. Hopefully more progress will have been made toward the eradication of malaria and of tuberculosis, yet the growing size of the task, in part because of the influence of political disturbances and warlike operations, plus unwillingness of the member countries to commit the necessary resources, makes many health workers skeptical that the goal will have been reached by the opening of the twenty-first century. There is perhaps more hope of smallpox eradication but only if initial successes can be consolidated and advanced by greater mobilization of resources.

Far greater expansion of health services, national and international, will be required if we are to extend more broadly the well-proven available preventive measures for such diseases as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, to correlate activities with the agricultural sector so that food shortages may be eliminated as the cause of malnutrition, and to so organize a medical care system that those diseases which do occur will be treated promptly and adequately.

If we are to think seriously of ever attaining the WHO definition of health, we must improve the intrinsic nature of human beings, a highly complicated problem. It is likely that we can carry out more effective guidance of human growth if we capitalize on existing and prospective possibilities for

better knowledge of the physiology and psychology of nutrition and can achieve more balanced food production.

One may hopefully contemplate substantial increase in productivity of genetics research but application of this knowledge to society will not be easy. Decisions on family size and child spacing are directly affected by the complexity of human traditions, needs, and emotions. Many believe that natural interests and instincts will, in the long run, work for betterment, provided that there is continuing expansion in knowledge of family planning techniques, in discovery of more effective contraceptives, and in effective revision of legislation and development of a distribution system so that all methods are equally available to all, regardless of social or financial status.

To accomplish the above, improved and more comprehensive public health organization will be a major consideration. There is enough knowledge now to establish a sound base for such organization everywhere, but there is great need for continued research on administrative techniques and on the most effective way to deploy all varieties of health manpower. The relation of health planning to total social and economic development is only beginning to be understood and health planning will surely become a more central concern for all national health administrations. In this regard many believe that the World Health Organization ought to undertake a greatly expanded role in establishment of regulations and standards and in the monitoring of national performance in complying with these. Obviously, such a course of action would require even more extensive collaboration among the member countries. It would not, however, involve any loss of national autonomy, since the Organization's role would still be one of reporting findings, leaving further action within national boundaries to the individual countries.

Perhaps the greatest discrepancy in the health field is between our progress in rela-

tion to physical disease and our slowness in regard to effective and validated treatment measures and preventive techniques for mental disease. That the task is obviously more difficult and more complex than, for example, the relatively simple bacterium-human being relationship, ought to be an incentive rather than a deterrent.

No amount of development of health manpower, health organization, or health techniques can be truly effective without improvement in health knowledge of the public. In some areas, for example, the role of the health professional has been so emphasized as to create an over/dependence on him. Education directed at each person and at his family, neighbors, and work place ought to result in better health knowledge and in development of better ways of selecting persons needing the attention of health professionals to ensure more effective utilization of their time.

Finally, one can only hope that the world will resolve some of the great issues which bear more potential for manmade dangers to health than those which nature can devise unaided. The threat of ionizing radiation derives from expanded medical and industrial use but even more from the risk of a world-wide nuclear holocaust. For public health to develop adequately, the need for peace is absolutely basic. Conversely, peace for the world in the year 2000 may well depend upon progress in achieving health.

Will international collaboration and understanding continue to grow? Can the countries agree that the health of all men is so great a good, so much a prerequisite for "the pursuit of happiness," and so obvious a route for general improvement of international relations, that not only must a larger share of national resources be devoted to health, directly and indirectly, but that war and famine need eradication as much as pestilence? Man has the capacity for this. Will he use it?

Summary

One can hardly project the state of international health at the beginning of the next century without taking into consideration the framework of the past and present. International health collaboration began as a concern for protection of peoples of various individual nations against dangers and diseases brought to them from other countries. Current concepts, far broader, consistent with greater breadth of public health concern in individual countries, are likely to hold true for the future. The bold and simple statements in the Preamble to the World Health Organization Constitution that health is essential for peace, that it is a human right and not a privilege, will be as true and important in the year 2000 as they are today.

Health advances in the recent past have been substantial, yet differences between countries with the best and those with the poorest records have sometimes become even greater. Some infectious diseases have been almost entirely eliminated but infant mortality in populous regions of the world is still excessive. More communities now have acceptable water supplies but technological progress has often been accompanied by unforeseen ecologic disturbances. Far more needs to be learned about balance between benefit and danger of pesticides. There is danger that decreased incidence of infectious disease will result in less attention to this important aspect of health. Research and technical advances can be effective only if there is improved public health organization, particularly health planning.

Community health and politics are inevitably intertwined. Internationally this is reflected in the danger to peace, a central concern to all health people. Man now has the capacity and technical knowledge for extraordinary health advance. Organization and political coordination are essential to achieve this. The optimists believe it can be done. □

Respice, Adspice, Prospice (Resumen)

Difícilmente se podría proyectar el estado de salud internacional a comienzos del siglo próximo sin tener en consideración la estructura del pasado y del presente. La colaboración internacional en el campo de la salud nació de una preocupación por la protección de los pueblos de las diversas naciones contra los peligros y las enfermedades procedentes de otros países. Los conceptos de actualidad, mucho más amplios, que responden a una mayor preocupación por la salud pública en cada país, regirán probablemente para el futuro. La precisa y sencilla declaración contenida en el preámbulo de la Organización Mundial de la Salud en el sentido de que la salud es esencial para la paz, es un derecho humano y no un privilegio, seguirá siendo tan cierta e importante en el año 2000 como lo es hoy.

En el pasado reciente la salud ha experimentado considerables avances y, sin embargo, las diferencias entre los países mejor situados y los menos favorecidos a veces se acentúan aún más. Se han eliminado casi totalmente algunas enfermedades infecciosas, pero la mortalidad infantil en algunas regiones densamente pobladas del mundo sigue siendo excesiva. Son

más numerosas las comunidades que cuentan con un abastecimiento de agua aceptable, pero los progresos tecnológicos han ido acompañados, con frecuencia, de trastornos ecológicos imprevistos. Queda todavía mucho por aprender acerca del equilibrio entre los beneficios y los peligros de los insecticidas. Existe el peligro de que la disminución de la incidencia de enfermedades infecciosas redunde en perjuicio de la atención que merece este importante aspecto de la salud. Las investigaciones y los progresos técnicos sólo pueden ser eficaces en presencia de una mejor organización de salud pública, particularmente en lo que se refiere a la planificación.

La salud de la comunidad y la política están inevitablemente entrelazadas. En la esfera internacional ello se refleja en el peligro para la paz, preocupación de todos los que laboran en el campo de la salud. El hombre tiene la capacidad y los conocimientos técnicos para realizar un progreso extraordinario en materia de salud. Para ello es indispensable una organización y una coordinación política. Los optimistas creen que se alcanzará este objetivo.

Respice, Adspice, Prospice (Resumo)

É quase impossível prever a situação da saúde internacional no começo do próximo século sem tomar-se em consideração a estrutura do passado e do presente. A colaboração internacional no setor de saúde começou como decorrência da preocupação quanto a proteção de populações de várias nações individuais contra perigos e enfermidades trazidas de outros países. Os conceitos atuais, muito mais amplos, consistentes com a maior amplitude de preocupação de saúde pública em países individuais, são tendentes a ser aplicados no futuro. As declarações simples mas categóricas no Preâmbulo da Constituição da Organização Mundial da Saúde, de que saúde é essencial a paz, que é um direito humano e não um privilégio, serão tão verdadeiras e importantes no ano 2000 como são atualmente.

Os melhoramentos no setor de saúde no passado recente tem sido substanciais, entretanto, as diferenças entre países que possuem os melhores índices e aqueles que possuem os piores índices tem aumentado em alguns casos. Algumas doenças infecciosas foram quase in-

teiramente eliminadas, mas a mortalidade infantil em regiões populosas do universo é ainda excessiva. Maior número de comunidades possuem agora sistemas satisfatórios de água, mas o progresso tecnológico frequentemente vem acompanhado de distúrbios ecológicos imprevisíveis. É necessário realizar-se maiores estudos sobre o equilíbrio entre os benefícios e perigos de pesticidas. Existe o perigo de que a decrescente incidência de doenças infecciosas resulte em menor atenção a este importante aspecto de saúde. Pesquisas e progressos tecnológicos podem ser eficazes somente se existir organização de saúde pública melhorada, particularmente planificação de saúde.

Saúde comunitária e política são inevitavelmente entrelaçadas. Internacionalmente, isso é refletido em perigo a paz, preocupação principal dos povos de saúde. O homem possui agora capacidade e conhecimento técnico para obter extraordinário progresso em saúde. Organização e coordenação política são essenciais para conseguir estes objetivos. Os otimistas acreditam que isso pode ser alcançado.

Respice, Adspice, Prospice (Résumé)

Il est difficile de faire des prévisions concernant l'état de la santé internationale au début du prochain siècle sans tenir compte du passé et du présent. Le désir de protéger les populations des différents pays contre les maladies qui sont introduites d'un pays à l'autre a marqué le début de la collaboration internationale dans le domaine de la santé. Les notions actuelles qui sont beaucoup plus larges et qui sont conformes à l'étendue de l'intérêt manifesté pour la santé publique dans les divers pays, sont susceptibles de prévaloir dans l'avenir. Les déclarations simples et courageuses qui figurent dans le Préambule de la Constitution de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé et selon lesquelles la santé est une condition fondamentale de la paix, que c'est un droit de l'homme et non un privilège, seront aussi vraies et importantes en l'année 2000 qu'elles le sont aujourd'hui.

Les progrès réalisés au cours des dernières années dans le domaine de la santé ont été appréciables; pourtant, les différences entre les pays ayant eu les meilleurs accomplissements et ceux ayant eu les moins satisfaisants sont devenues encore plus marquées. Certaines maladies infectieuses ont été presque entièrement éliminées; toutefois, la mortalité infantile dans les régions peuplées du monde

est encore excessive. Un plus grand nombre de communautés disposent maintenant d'un approvisionnement en eau adéquat, mais le progrès technique a été souvent accompagné par des perturbations écologiques imprévues. Nous avons encore beaucoup à apprendre si nous voulons maintenir la balance entre les avantages et les risques des pesticides. On court le danger que, par suite d'une incidence moindre des maladies infectieuses, on commence à négliger cet important aspect de la santé. La recherche et les progrès techniques ne peuvent être efficaces que si nous disposons d'une meilleure organisation de la santé publique, notamment en ce qui concerne la planification de la santé.

La santé de la communauté et la politique sont inéluctablement liées. Sur le plan international, cet état de choses peut avoir des répercussions fâcheuses sur le maintien de la paix, préoccupation importante pour toutes les personnes s'occupant de questions sanitaires. L'homme a maintenant la capacité et les connaissances techniques lui permettant de réaliser des programmes extraordinaires en matière de sauvegarde de la santé. L'organisation et la coordination sur le plan politique sont indispensables à cette fin. Les optimistes sont convaincus que c'est réalisable.