Author's response to reviews

Title: Overcoming Gaps to Advance Global Health Equity: A Symposium on New Directions for Research

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New Directions for Research: Bridging Divisive Gaps to Advance Global Health Equity
Julio Frenk and Lincoln Chen

Response to the Reviewers’ Comments

Dear HARPS Editorial Team,

We are pleased to submit our revised manuscript to be considered for publication in Health Research Policy and Systems. Please note that we are suggesting to change the manuscript’s title to: “Overcoming Gaps to Advance Global Health Equity: A Symposium on New Directions for Research.”

This cover letter provides a point by point response to the reviewers’ comments and suggestions. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if we could clarify any of the changes that we have made to the manuscript.

Thank you for your consideration.

With best regards,

Julio Frenk
Dean of the Faculty, Harvard School of Public Health

Lincoln Chen
President, China Medical Board

Reviewer: Patrick Kelley

1. While the “gaps identified” can be divisive, we agree that the term may be a
rather strong characterization. We have thus softened the polarizing adjective.

2. The reviewer is correct that both Roger Glass and Marian Jacobs were referring to the now announced US Government MEPI program (Medical Education Program Initiative), focused on strengthening capacity of professional educational institutions in sub-Saharan Africa.

3. We agree and have toned down the comment that infectious epidemics will eventually spread to all; many epidemics do not necessarily spread globally.

4. We have also revised our sentence that “all knowledge eventually inspires action.” Knowledge certainly shapes all actions, but translation into action may be driven by many forces, including, but not confined to, knowledge.

Reviewer: Dermot Maher

1. We have indicated in the title that this Commentary is a report on the proceedings of a Symposium convened by the Harvard School of Public Health.

2. The Abstract now cites the Symposium as the source of this paper.

3. In order to clarify which text relates to Symposium summary and which are reflections of the authors, we have shifted the authors’ commentary to the discussion section in the conclusion. This shift, we believe, should communicate clearly what was covered in the Symposium, and what additional reflections were introduced by the authors.

4. We have revised the statement about the role of knowledge in health advances to offer a more nuanced presentation of the significant role of knowledge within the context of many other social and medical determinants of health.

5. We have introduced the global economic crisis that threatens global health equity, including the financing of health research.

6. The financing of overseas development assistance in health is reported and referenced in the current draft. The amount of this total devoted to health research is not well estimated, and we have thus not included health research budget figures in this sentence.

7. We have, as described earlier, edited and shifted the renewed movement to the conclusion, as suggested by the Reviewer.

8. We have added text to underscore the necessity for all countries to have sufficient health research capacity to tackle not only individual country health challenges, but also to contribute to the global pool of knowledge as a public good.

9. We have explained Dr. Ghaffar’s mention of the purpose and value of research collaborations.

10. We have added text to describe the Montreux conference.

11. We have added text to describe the momentum built by the series of global conferences.

12. We have added text to offer nuanced description of private-public
partnerships.

13. Included in these comments is the often disappointing financial participation of private commercial sector in the co-funding of joint ventures.

14. We have deepened our explanation of the importance of harmonizing excellence with relevance.

Discretionary Revisions:

15. We have added the gap between clinical and public health amongst key gaps.

16. To avoid confusion about the meaning of the term “promotion” of research capacity, we have changed the descriptive term.

17. We have edited the sentence to achieve greater clarity.

18. We have edited the architecture statement from more optimal to improved architecture.