Reviewer's report

Title: New Directions for Research: Bridging Divisive Gaps to Advance Global Health Equity

Version: 1 Date: 2 October 2010

Reviewer: Patrick Kelley

Reviewer's report:

This short article summarizes a symposium to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the report of the Commission on Health Research for Development. As such, it achieves its goal of underscoring the important role of essential national health research, a subject that has never been more timely. In addition to brief commentary on the individual speakers in the various panels, the authors provide some additional editorial emphasis. The points of the report are clearly communicated. I will, however, mention a few points.

1. The authors note historic gaps between different types of research, the global vs. local dimension, the public vs. private sector, etc. These gaps are described as "divisive". It was not explained how this divisiveness has manifested itself. It struck me that the word "divisive" was a rather strong characterization of these gaps.

2. Both Roger Glass and Marion Jacobs apparently referred to a new US funded program to strengthen African medical schools. I believe they are both referring to the same MEPI program but from the paper that is now made clear.

3. One sentence in the paper states: "Look too at pandemics: if there is an outbreak in one part of the world, it will paralyze commerce and eventually spread to all." This struck me as a bit of hyperbole as many outbreaks or pandemics do not paralyze commerce. Many epidemics do not spread globally. Some editing there may be useful.

4. Another sentence states: "Knowledge is the most potent instrument that we have for making the world a better place, yet gaps persist between knowledge and action. This is in fact an artificial divide, much like the old traditional divide between body and mind. All knowledge eventually inspires action." I was wondering where the evidence is to be found that "all knowledge eventually inspires action".

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.