



APRU World Institute Workshop

“The Role of Universities in Addressing Emerging Public Health Threats in the Asia Pacific Region.”

May 24-26, 2007

School of Public Health, Peking University

PANEL DISCUSSION 1: PREPARING THE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE

The effectiveness with which the world tackles its most crucial public health challenges depends on the caliber of its public health workforce - which in turn is a function of the quality of the education and training they receive. Universities have a critical leadership role in this regard, which is why many of the leading universities of the world have well-established Schools of Public Health in addition to the traditional Schools of Medicine.

The question before us is whether these institutions can remain relevant and responsive to the rapidly changing demands imposed on them: How can we ensure that what is taught in public health courses will be sufficient for the tasks that graduates will face, with regards to the emerging public health threats? How do we ensure that academic content is grounded in real-world experience, and that validated field experience, in turn, will get translated into new academic knowledge that is constantly updated and disseminated?

The Institute of Medicine had in 2003 underscored the need for a broad-based ecological approach to human health and had in fact identified 8 specific content areas that are needed if the challenges are to be addressed. Is laying emphasis on these areas - communication, community-based participatory research, cultural competence, ethics, genomics, global health, informatics, and policy/law – the answer? Would this “American” recipe be equally applicable across the Asia-Pacific region? Yet another issue is the need to bridge the widening resource gap between developing and developed countries – an obvious concern for the world given the borderless nature of emerging public health threats.

The lead speaker, who is from one of the world’s leading Schools of Public Health, will provoke our thinking about how institutions of higher learning should go about building capacity to address emerging public health threats. Next, four eminent speakers from diverse public health backgrounds, namely: the teaching of Public Health to medical students in the world’s most populous country; the training of the Public Health workforce for the world’s largest army; a Philanthropic Foundation dedicated to fighting the world’s biggest health problems; and an international humanitarian movement whose stated mission is to protect human life and health, will share their particular viewpoints from the trenches. Finally, all expert participants will join the debate with a view to distilling the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.