

Future Directions for Health Policy Analysis: a Tribute to the Work of Professor Gill Walt
Special Issue of Health Policy and Planning

The journal Health Policy and Planning has published a special issue on health policy analysis, for which Lucy Gilson is one of the guest editors. The edition is based on a workshop organised by the Consortium for Research on Equitable Health Systems; the HLSP Institute; Kings College, London; and the Overseas Development Institute.

Health policy analysis, the inquiry into how health policies are developed and implemented, is a recognised academic field in high income countries with practical importance to public health. Health policy analysis can help to explain why certain issues receive political attention and others do not. It can also identify the perverse and unintended consequences of policy decisions.

Despite this, health policy analysis in low and middle-income countries remains an underdeveloped area of work. The editors of this issue argue that “in the year we celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, it is clear that better understanding of the challenges to health policy implementation and renewed action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals are vital.”

The papers presented in this special issue of Health Policy and Planning focus on the current state of health policy analysis in low and middle-income countries. They pay tribute to the work of Gill Walt, a key intellectual influence in the field of health policy analysis and co-founder of Health Policy and Planning.

The majority of the papers in this issue look at methodological issues relating to health policy analysis and reflect on the authors’ own experiences in this field. They call for an explicit focus on the methods that are used to undertake policy analysis, recommending that future work should place more emphasis on comparing experience across countries and policies. They also call for greater investment in the field to support capacity development, deepen analysis and enable engagement with policy practitioners.

This special issue will be of particular relevance to researchers, analysts, advocates and managers that carry out health policy analysis work, especially those based in low and middle-income countries. It is also useful for people who want to increase their understanding of health policy analysis.

Notes to editors:

- This special issue can be accessed at: <http://heapol.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/czn025>
- The issue is available online and in print as of the 29th of August 2008. Three of the papers are freely available online and the rest will require a subscription.
- Health Policy and Planning publishes high quality research and original ideas relating to international health care, focusing on issues of particular relevance to low- and middle-income countries. It aims to improve the design and implementation of health policies in low- and middle-income countries.
- Gill Walt is an Emeritus Professor of International Health Policy based in the Health Policy Unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is also a member of the CREHS advisory group. A short biography is available at: <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/people/walt.gill>
- The Consortium for Research on Equitable Health Systems (CREHS) is a five year DFID funded international research programme that aims to generate knowledge about how to strengthen health systems policies and interventions in ways that benefit the poorest people in society. For more information about CREHS go to: www.crehs.lshtm.ac.uk