

REPORTS OF NOTE

**Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases: Global Microbial Threats in the 1990s**

The Clinton Administration has joined the chorus of scientific organizations that are concerned about emerging infectious diseases. It shares the conclusions of the World Health Organization, the U.S. Institute of Medicine, and others that there has been a resurgence of infectious diseases throughout the world including outbreaks of cholera, malaria, yellow fever and diphtheria. Western nations have seen re-emerging threats from multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, pneumonia, meningitis, rabies and diarrheal diseases caused by the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum* and by certain strains of *Escherichia coli* bacteria.

The White House Committee on International Science, Engineering, and Technology recently released *Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases: Global Microbial Threats in the 1990s*. It shares the view that infectious diseases are a serious threat to the world's population. The committee recommends several measures to better protect the world's people. These include the establishment of national and regional disease surveillance networks, a global alert system, and concentrated efforts to rebuild local, state and federal surveillance units within the United States.

*Committee on International Science, Engineering, and Technology  
National Science and Technology Council  
Old Executive Office Building, Suite 435  
Washington, DC 20500*

**Human Development Report 1995**

The United Nations Development Programme released its sixth annual *Human Development Report 1995*, which examines the disparities between treatment of women and men around the world. It paints an optimistic picture for women in many countries closing the gap with men in education and health, but it also shows how far women have yet to go.

The report's main message is that "human development, if not engendered, is endangered." It establishes a 'human development paradigm' that has three principles. First, equality of rights between women and men must be established as a fundamental principle. Second, women must be regarded as agents and beneficiaries of change. Finally, investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices will contribute to economic growth and overall development.

The basic feature of the report is the Human Development Index that ranks countries on the basis of life expectancy, education and basic purchasing power. The index is then modified to show the difference between the human development of women and men and then measures the empowerment of women in economic and political terms.

The *Human Development Report 1995* recommends that all countries endeavour to reach a minimum target of 30 percent female representation in national parliaments or legislatures and that legal systems ensure the equal rights of all women in matters of property, inheritance and divorce.

*Oxford University Press for the United Nations  
Development Programme  
198 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016*

**Health Services Research: Work Force and Educational Issues**

*Health Services Research: Work Force and Education Issues*, a new report from the Institute of Medicine, examines the education and training of workers in health services research, defined as "a multidisciplinary field of inquiry, both basic and applied, that examines the use, costs, quality, accessibility, delivery, organization, financing and outcomes of health care services to increase knowledge and understanding of the structure, processes, and effects of health services for individuals and populations."

The report explores the increasing demand for knowledge about many aspects of health care including costs, quality and patient and consumer preferences. For instance, the report asks,

when faced with the same symptoms, why do some people seek medical care and others avoid contact with health care providers? The report emphasizes the need for well-trained health service researchers who will make decisions about health care with appropriate and relevant information.

*National Academy Press  
2101 Constitution Avenue  
Washington, DC 20418*

**Vaccines for Children: Reexamination of Program Goals and Implementation Needed to Ensure Vaccination**

The General Accounting Office of the U.S. Congress recently conducted a study to determine whether vaccines for children are achieving their goals of improving children's immunization coverage by reducing the cost of vaccines for their parents. The GAO concludes that the cost of vaccines for parents has not been a significant barrier to children's immunizations.

The main barriers are missed opportunities for vaccination due to parents' lack of awareness of their children's vaccination schedule, inconvenient clinic hours or inflexible clinic policies. The Centers for Disease Control have devoted considerable effort and resources to help jumpstart this vaccination program for children, but implementation is still incomplete. It is uncertain whether this program can reach the areas or populations in which immunization rates are low and consequently the risk of disease is high.

*Vaccines for Children: Reexamination of Program Goals and Implementation Needed to Ensure Vaccination* recommends that Congress may want to consider refocusing the children's vaccine program from improvement of general immunization rates to the achievement of higher immunization rates in geographic and economic areas of greater need.

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