



Writing about Neglected Tropical Diseases

Millennium Development Goal Number 6:

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are so called because they exclusively affect the poor and marginalized in low-income countries and receive little attention. They include several parasitic, bacterial and viral infections and are the most common afflictions of humankind. They strike the world's poorest people, an estimated 3 billion people, who subsist on less than US \$2 per day and live in remote and rural areas of low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Although these diseases are thought to kill up to 500,000 people per year, mortality figures alone do not capture their main impact on public health, which largely arises from chronic disability and morbidity. For some NTDs, such as Lymphatic Filariasis (LF, which causes elephantiasis) and onchocerciasis, disability is also associated with severe stigma and trauma, destroying individuals' lives and family support systems. Neglected tropical diseases combined, cause as much disease and suffering as malaria or tuberculosis. They are the 4th most important group of communicable diseases, behind lower respiratory infections, HIV and AIDS, and diarrhoeal diseases. Children, women and those living in remote areas without any access to an effective health care system are most vulnerable. An increasing body of evidence also indicates that co-infection with one or more of the neglected tropical diseases adversely affect the natural history and progression of malaria and HIV and AIDS.

Why do these diseases primarily affect the poorest of the poor in rural and deprived urban settings? Why are they underestimated in terms of their public health and economic significance? Why is there a lack of coordinated research and control efforts? How can this unacceptable situation be changed? What sort of evidence is there to suggest the connection between NTDs and HIV and AIDS, malaria and TB?

Using your own research and investigative methods, you are invited to look at this issue and write about what is happening in this field that could make a difference. Use facts to support your article.

Useful sites to begin your research:

http://www.malariaconsortium.org/pages/neglected_diseases_and_malaria.html

http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/en/

<http://gnntdc.sabin.org/>

<http://www.neglectedtropicaldiseases.org>