



Overview

The vision of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington is to make available to the world high quality information on population health, its determinants, and the performance of health systems. IHME seeks to achieve this directly, by catalyzing the work of others, and by training researchers as well as policy-makers.

Multiple global health efforts have sprung up over the past several decades as health spending has risen to unprecedented highs, accounting for 9% of total economic output. Yet a lack of objective, comparable, and comprehensible information on health hinders these various efforts from achieving their highest aims. By attracting a core of talented researchers and collaborating with key actors and institutions to mutual benefit, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation intends to build the needed base of objective evidence about what works and what does not work to improve health conditions and health systems performance. Most importantly, IHME will make this evidence base freely and readily available in the public domain. Better health information can be expected to lead to more knowledgeable decision-making and higher achievements in health.

Objectives

IHME focuses its competencies to pursue research, education, and evaluation across different topical areas. To make progress in each of these areas, IHME works on seven specific objectives that together build a foundation of knowledge, intellectual dynamism, and functional capacity to provide higher-quality health information.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation will:

- Build a community of researchers and analysts trained specifically in global health measurement, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Establish an effective community of collaborating centers to act in concert to improve health information.
- Develop new frameworks, methods, and instruments that facilitate better analysis and efficient data collection.
- Apply the best methods and analytic techniques to data in a uniform manner to produce comparable results across countries for a range of health outcomes, health service coverage, and resource inputs.
- Create a global data bank where information is made publicly available to anyone who wishes to use it.
- Identify gaps in information and catalyze collaborative efforts to collect new data that will expand the evidence base in health.
- Ensure wide dissemination of results, instruments, and methods in ways that are easy to understand, access, and use so that others can be equipped with valuable tools and information.

Areas of Work

The spectrum of critical work in global health information includes a wide range of seminal efforts including: setting norms and standards; developing new conceptual frameworks, analytical techniques, and instruments for data collection; validating new methods; creating hardware and software to assist in data collection; catalyzing new data collection; archiving existing datasets for public use; analyzing existing data in comparable ways; reporting and disseminating results; strengthening national analytical capacity; and strengthening national data collection systems, amongst others. In order to achieve an efficient division of labor, IHME will collaborate with other organizations that share responsibility in fulfilling these functions.

To best leverage its competencies, IHME focuses on five key areas of work that cut across the range of health information issues in global health:

- Health outcomes
- Health services
- Resource inputs
- Evaluations
- Decision analytics

IHME supports a core set of research, evaluation, and education activities within each topical area, with emphasis placed on specific subcategories. Health outcomes will encompass the subcategories of: incidence and prevalence of disease, impairment, and disability; causes of death; mortality; comparative risk assessment; and burden of disease. Health services will focus on hospital technical quality and effective coverage of priority interventions. Resource inputs will touch upon international resource flows, national public expenditures, and household expenditures. The evaluations topical area will examine national health systems and global initiatives. Decision analytics will include activities related to forecasts of health, services, and resources. As IHME's activities deepen, work will be undertaken in additional subcategories such as inequalities, focused policy reviews, and health system responsiveness, amongst others. General research-related activities applied across each of the five areas will include: archiving datasets for public use; analyzing and synthesizing existing data; reporting and disseminating results; validating new methods; building conceptual frameworks; and catalyzing new data collection.

Governance and Setting

The Director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation is Christopher JL Murray. IHME is overseen by an international board, chaired by Julio Frenk and comprised of leading figures from agencies and health experts. IHME is part of the University of Washington. This setting allows it to maximize the benefits of an academic and research-focused environment while maintaining scientific independence. A scientific oversight group will ensure that IHME's products meet rigorous standards of objectivity and scientific validity.

Five teams of researchers, one team for each topical area, guide the work of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in conjunction with a central management team. Together, they implement research, education, and evaluation activities that are robust and relevant to existing global needs and emerging challenges. To develop the cadre of young researchers needed to

sustain the efforts in each topical area, IHME has created a post-bachelor and a post-graduate fellows program. It also is recruiting junior and senior faculty who will both lead IHME research activities and participate as full members in the University of Washington community. By supporting its activities in a scholarly environment, IHME will be well-placed to attract leading researchers and shepherd the next generation of analysts in global health. It will also be primed to produce scholarly publications, spend focused time on research endeavors, and host data and information in an impartial environment.

Dissemination of Information, Evidence, and Tools

IHME strives to be the lighthouse standard for high-quality information on health that is valid, comparable, comprehensible, and freely available in the public domain. To this end, IHME places a premium on dissemination efforts and creating tools that equip others with the capacity to apply techniques and assess results. Beginning in its third year of operation, IHME will produce an annual report that highlights global progress on improving health especially for the most disadvantaged. Additional publications relevant to the topical areas will be produced as appropriate to reach a diverse set of audiences including decision-makers in health, researchers, donors, practitioners, media, and the interested public. IHME will promulgate software to both instruct individuals and analyze existing data. It will also emphasize the creation of curriculum and training materials so that results are paired with learning mechanisms that can help others to understand them better, apply techniques, and harness the power of new health information.

Finally, IHME will develop an online global data bank, intended to be a repository for health information that is easy to use and access. It will include all results generated by the Institute and the data from which they came. It will also serve to attract other researchers and institutions in global health to post their data in a way that expands the potential audience of users. IHME stands by the principle that information should be freely available to all who wish to use it. By expressly developing the global data bank, IHME hopes to promote these principles not just in its own work and collaborations, but on a global scale as well.

Collaboration

An important consideration for IHME is establishing mechanisms by which it interacts with a variety of actors who conduct nationally-focused research and data collection. Such institutions (such as national university research centers, ministries of health and statistics, and even subnational agencies) have access to and understanding of local and national data that helps to complete the picture of global health. All of them are experts imperative to accurately describe the evidence base and inform analysis.

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mexican Health Foundation (Funsalud) and the Carso Health Institute will convene a consultation in Mexico City in September 2008, in order to discuss exactly how national institutions might best work together with IHME. This meeting will be important to advancing the group's collective understanding of ways to derive mutual benefit by working together.

The hope is that this consultation will provide a concrete foundation upon which to have potentially other targeted meetings in the future that help to build out a network of essential actors who share data with one another and engage in collaborative research.



Summary

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation cannot guarantee improved health outcomes, but it can guarantee a much stronger foundation of publicly available evidence that empowers policymakers, donors, practitioners, researchers, local and global decision-makers, and others to allocate limited resources strategically. Through its efforts to make more information of higher quality available in comparable and comprehensible formats, IHME will spark the spectrum of actions needed to achieve the best possible impact from global health efforts.

Website

<http://www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org/>

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