


Symposium

Reflections on Global Health Law Education

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Abstract

Global health law has now emerged as an area of specialisation for students interested in global problems concerning health due largely, if not principally, to the inspiring lifelong scholarly work of Professor Lawrence Gostin. A growing number of universities in the world have established programs on global health law in which they address questions of equity and solidarity in addressing public health issues and emergencies, global and national preparedness for pandemics and other health related emergencies, international health regulations, and the intersection between health and human rights, to mention a few. We can expect that as global health threats and inequalities in access to health continue to rise, interest in global health law as a field of legal research and education will continue to grow.

Keywords: global health law education; Laurence Gostin

Everyone who has been involved in curriculum development will testify that it is nearly impossible to formulate a new program or course without first ascertaining that there is ample scholarship on which the program or course will be based. Some universities require, furthermore, that evidence is shown that the program or course is feasible — in the dual senses that it will attract enough interest from students and that there is adequate expertise among faculty to offer instruction to students.

Global health law has now emerged as an area of specialization for students interested in global problems concerning health, due largely, if not principally, to the inspiring lifelong scholarly work of Professor Lawrence Gostin. A growing number of universities in the world have established programs on global health law in which they address questions of equity and solidarity in public health issues and emergencies, global and national preparedness for pandemics and other health-related emergencies, international health regulations, and the intersection between health and human rights, to mention a few. The questions with which global health law is preoccupied have thus clearly gone beyond the narrow confines of tortious liability for medical negligence, health insurance law, and the regulation of medical and other health professionals, previously an esoteric domain of domestic legal practice. Global health law is a more exciting and vibrant field suited to interdisciplinary approaches and open to students from various disciplines, including public health and medicine, law, public policy, development studies, and international relations.

Very few scholars gain the distinction of inaugurating a new field of specialization and of producing research that has global impact. Lawrence Gostin is a rare scholar who has earned such distinction, firstly, by conducting and producing original and high-quality research which has helped to foreground global health law as a field of legal research and specialization and an area of impactful socially engaged activities. Over the years, he has devoted attention to promoting the field, training and mentoring young scholars and professionals, and advocating for more robust and effective international standards and procedures governing global health law. His commitment to global social justice, which underlines much of his scholarly work, is also reflected in his exceptional record of inclusivity, making it possible that scholars and professionals from the Global South contribute meaningfully to discussions on solutions to global health problems.

We can expect that as global health threats and inequalities in access to health continue to rise, interest in global health law as a field of legal research and education will continue to grow. Those of us who have had the distinct privilege of working with, and being inspired by, Lawrence Gostin have a singular duty to take on the mantle with pride and double our efforts to develop this area of law through research and teaching so that it gains a permanent space in university curricula and as a distinct area of professional practice.

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