

health. A special effort must also be made to promote evidence-based public health research. I can especially recommend that an evaluation should be undertaken to ascertain whether current training is adequate to cope with the demands of public health practice.

Q. What is your vision for the future of public health education?

A. It must evolve to cover all levels of health workers, with an emphasis on the improvement of managerial skills. It must also include in-service training at undergraduate level and specialist

post-graduate graduate programmes, Master's and PhD degrees. Brazil is examining the possibility of setting up an undergraduate public health course. This kind of training can lead to a wider distribution of public health skills to other professions. Much of what is taught in other health-based courses (medicine, for instance, is a pre-requisite to study public health in several countries) is not necessarily

of great use for someone intending to pursue a career in this field. In low-income countries, one can argue there is no point of investing in training doctors when they do not need such advanced medical skills to be public health practitioners. It certainly would make more sense to prepare public health workers at technical or professional level in undergraduate courses. ■

“The country [Brazil] now has a ratio of 0.97 public health officers per 1000 inhabitants.”

Recent news from WHO

- The percentage of people living with HIV has levelled off globally and the number of new infections has fallen, partly due to the impact of AIDS programmes and partly due to a revised methodology for producing the figures, WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) announced on 20 November. In 2007, 33.2 million people were estimated to be living with HIV, 2.5 million people became newly infected and 2.1 million people died of AIDS. In 2006, the estimate for the number of people living with AIDS was 39.5 million.
- A strategy and action plan to give poor populations better access to medicines, vaccines and diagnostic tools is scheduled to be presented to the World Health Assembly in May 2008, WHO announced on 10 November. The global strategy is being prepared by the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property.
- On 29 October, the Health Metrics Network, a global partnership hosted by WHO, launched a drive in Beijing, China, to encourage countries to count all births and deaths through civil registration, which provides statistics on births, deaths and causes of death. Every year 38 million deaths and 48 million births go unregistered.
- The first internationally-agreed classification code for assessing the health of children and youth (ICF-CY) in the context of their physical and social environments was published by WHO on 24 October. The code uses a methodology that has long been standard for adults. The new code is currently available in English and can be purchased at: <http://www.who.int/bookorders>
- The supply of vaccines based on the H5N1 avian influenza strain is expected to rise sharply. WHO experts announced, on 23 October, that they expect global production to rise to 4.5 billion immunization courses per year in 2010 due to scientific advances and increased production capacity. However, 6.7 billion vaccine courses would be needed in a six-month period to protect the whole world.
- Climate change and health will be the theme for next year's World Health Day on 7 April, WHO announced on 23 October.
- New maternal mortality figures show that the world is unlikely to meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5, WHO and its partners announced on 12 October. An annual decline of 5.5% in maternal mortality ratios between 1990 and 2015 is required to achieve MDG 5, but the figures released by WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank show an annual decline of 2.5%.
- The December 2006 to May 2007 meningitis season across the African Meningitis Belt saw an estimated 53 000 cases, with an estimated 4000 deaths. This was the highest number of cases and deaths since the 2001 season.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre>

SAGE: request for nominations

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. WHO is soliciting proposals for nominations for current and future vacancies on SAGE. Nominations for members from all regions have to be submitted by 21 December 2007.

Further information and instructions for nominations are available at: http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/sage_requests_nominations_intro/en/index.html