

A Celebration of Half a Century's Dedication to Relevance and Scholarship. A Note From the Founder and Editor-In-Chief, Professor Vicente Navarro

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The *International Journal of Health Services (IJHS)* started 50 years – half a century – ago, with the purpose of becoming a forum for the presentation of research work and policy proposals in the various dimensions of health care institutions across the globe. The intellectual and political climate of the 1960s in the United States favored the establishment of an academic journal open to all positions, united by a strong commitment to rigorous scholarship with the common purpose of improving the health, quality of life and wellbeing of populations. The conventional wisdom existing in the major health care institutions of the United States, inherited from the 1950s, needed to be subject to scrutiny and, if appropriate, critique. The creativity of the 1960s lead to a very active decade – the 1970s – on legislative proposal that improved the wellbeing of the population in the country. The journal was a product of this commitment to social relevance and rigorous scholarship.

From the beginning, several dimensions characterized this quarterly. One was, as already mentioned, a clear commitment to diversity of opinions and sensibilities, offering the chance for critical thinking to be expressed. As part of this commitment, it had an international identity, with the direct involvement of many well-known scientists from developed and developing countries as the members of the Editorial Board, all of them leading figures in their own area of expertise. The commitment of these scholars was critical for the success of the journal. Several of them, including myself, were founders of the International Association of Health Policy – although, the journal always valued its independence, never wanting to be an instrument of an association or institution. This independence of the Editorial Board was a condition of the journal's commitment to diversity.

In this moment special thanks are due to the first members of the Editorial Board, and very much in particular Professors Barbara Starfield and Elizabeth Fee from the Johns Hopkins University, and Nancy Krieger, now at Harvard University, of the United States; Professors Bo Burström and Finn Diderichsen,

from the Karolinska Institute of Sweden; Professor H.-U. Deppe, from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Germany; Professor Asa Christina Laurell, then at the Metropolitan University of Mexico City, Mexico; Professor Margaret Whitehead, from the University of Liverpool of England; Professor Giovanni Berlinguer, from the University “La Sapienza” of Italy; and Oscar Feo Istúriz, from the Carabobo Maracay University of Venezuela. More recent members of the Board have included Professor Joan Benach from the Pompeu Fabra University and Carmen Borrell from the Barcelona Public Health Agency, Spain; Alexis Benos from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; Francisco Armada, from the Pan American Health Organization of São Paulo, Brazil; Joel Lexchin, from York University, Toronto, Canada; Karen Messing, from the University of Quebec, Canada; Joakim Palme, from the Swedish Institute for Social Research, Sweden; David Stuckler, from Oxford University, UK; and David Coburn, from the University of Toronto, Canada, among many others. Also, special thanks are owed to the Associate Editors: David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler from CUNY of New York and Harvard University, USA, and Carles Muntaner, from the University of Toronto, Canada. Their assistance in more recent times has been instrumental in maintaining the interest, relevance, and quality of the journal. And this list of acknowledgement includes an extensive body of editorial consultants who have enriched the very large network of reviewers, which extends all over the world.

A second dimension of the journal has always been to broaden the meaning of health care to include other institutions and interventions that related to or impacted on the health and wellbeing of populations, broadening the meaning of health care policy to add health and social policy (as appears on the cover of the journal, in the definition of the subjects and themes that appear in the journal). Health and social policies are clearly inter-related. Therefore, work in these areas requires a

multidisciplinary approach, drawing from different areas of knowledge such as political economy, sociology, history and philosophy, as well as ethics and law, also defined on the journal's cover.

To look through the pages of the *IJHS*, from the beginning to the latest edition, is to see the enormous changes that have occurred in health policies across the globe, in response to the many political changes and developments of the past half century. At the beginning, some of the major issues had to do with the realization that health, quality of life and wellbeing are interrelated concepts: health is far more than the absence of disease, as the famous "WHO declaration of health" recognized (a declaration very frequently quoted but rarely applied). Another issue was that health care is just a part – mostly, a remedial part – of the interventions needed to optimize wellbeing, quality of life and health. The *IJHS* was also a pioneer in the development of studies on the social, political, economic and cultural determinants of health, which have become a major dimension of the journal. And its influence was significant in the growth of this important area of scholarship, influence that was possible because of the independence and autonomy of the journal. To look not only at the trees, but also at the forest, an academic forum needs to be able to present and debate issues that are unavoidably controversial. In that respect, the *IJHS* is pleased to have been a forum for presentations and ideas that were considered too advanced at the time of their publication, yet later on have become widely accepted. The international composition of the Editorial Board and Editorial Consultants, as well as of the thousands of contributors to the journal, ensures a broad spectrum of perspectives. All major issues and subjects that have occurred, during this half a century, appear in the pages of this quarterly, even sometimes prior to them becoming of major international concern. Two recent examples are the focus on the growing health inequalities within and between countries, and the impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of populations. Some of the first articles written on these subjects appear in the *IJHS*, always enriched by a broad spectrum of positions.

Also, attention has always been given in this journal to social class, race and gender inequalities, and the reproduction of discrimination in health institutions. The forms of unequal and unfair exchange in commerce, and the worldwide financial crisis and its impact on health, are further examples.

This celebratory note must end with a personal note of thanks to persons and institutions that were instrumental in the journal's establishment. In first place, Professor Kerr L. White, the first chairman of the Department of Medical Care at Hopkins of what was then known as the JHU School of Hygiene and Public Health (today known as the Bloomberg School of Public Health). He was the person who invited me to join the Johns Hopkins University and encouraged me to start the journal. Dean John Hume supported the idea on the condition that I dedicated part of my time to directing it, which I accepted with great illusion and enthusiasm. The support of the School of Public Health of the Johns Hopkins University has been invaluable in the development of the journal. That support has continued throughout all these 50 years from the Deans of the School.

Also, I thank the staff of the editorial office, who have done a superb job, with special mention to Linda Strange who was the Managing Editor for many years and without whom the journal would not have flourished as it has. Thanks are also owed to the current Managing Editor, Aeve Ribbons, whose enthusiasm has made the task even more enjoyable, running a team with a long list of outstanding people who have guaranteed the professional presentation of the journal. And finally, my thanks go to Baywood first and SAGE afterwards, for their excellent editorial services.

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