

From the Editor-in-Chief

This issue of *World Health & Population* presents papers that have been published online by *WHP* and are selected here as representative of recent contributions to the journal. The papers in this issue include research from South Asia, Africa and China, as well as an essay on the use and misuse of racial categorization in health research.

The first two articles have direct relationship to the Millennium Development Goals, the highly appropriate theme and focus for many papers in *WHP* over the last several years. In the first article, and relating to MDG5 targeting a 75% reduction in maternal mortality, Mosiur Rahman investigates characteristics surrounding deliveries by adolescent mothers in Bangladesh. Using the 2004 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data, the author reports that a stunning 93.6% of all adolescent deliveries occur outside healthcare facilities. Rahman describes a series of economic and social characteristics associated with home and improperly attended deliveries among girls 15 to 19 years of age, including education, antenatal care and knowledge of possible complications of pregnancy. Childbearing during adolescence is a concern everywhere in the world, reflecting both physical and emotional vulnerability. MDG5 would direct us towards the causes among women very young to be having children.

The second article, by Nwokocha and Awomoyi of the University of Ibadan, examines attitudes towards childhood seizure disorders (“convulsions”) in Nigeria. Childhood seizures (normally febrile in etiology) are relatively common in North America and Western Europe but are rarely serious; they are nearly always followed up with medical care, thus ruling out potentially serious conditions and their treatment. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, convulsions are reported as a major cause of under-five mortality, and therefore should be of interest in relation to MDG4, which targets a two-thirds reduction in this category. For parents everywhere, a childhood seizure is a dramatic and highly concerning event. Parental response is conditioned by beliefs embedded in the socio-cultural system. The authors provide a robust and helpful theoretical framework for their research, which included both quantitative and qualitative data collection with 500 mothers in southwest Nigeria. The paper underlines the importance of empowering mothers to make healthcare decisions, even in the face of dramatic, culturally laden events such as childhood seizures.

The next article continues a series on rural–urban migration issues in China that have been published over the last few years in *WHP* by Li and his collaborators (see *WHP* 8:3, 9:4, 11:1). This time the authors describe research on stigma and quality of life (QOL), tackling the difficult issues of measuring (1) differential QOL between rural-to-urban migrants compared to rural-dwelling counterparts, (2) perceptions by both populations of social stigma and (3) the association between stigma and QOL. Using rigorously collected survey data and validated psychometric instruments (supported in part by the Fogarty International Center and the National Institute of Mental Health), the study supports the hypothesis that social stigma diminishes QOL. The authors conclude that actions recognizing the contributions of rural-to-urban migrants to China’s current prosperity would improve their status and thus would constitute an important policy direction.

The final article, “Human Nomenclature: From Race to Racism,” is an essay by Carlos Zubaran of the University of Western Sydney, Australia. The essay is prefaced by a helpful commentary by *WHP* Associate Editor Luchmie Narine. Both authors emphasize the importance of careful consideration of meaning (and oftentimes lack of validity) in the ubiquitous use of racial categories in social science and health services research. Researchers would be well served to consider the implications of groupings and potential stereotypes pointed out by Zubaran.

We hope that you find the papers in this issue interesting and valuable, and that you will also consult others recently released online at www.worldhealthandpopulation.com. *WHP* remains committed to its mission to provide a forum for researchers and policy makers worldwide to publish and disseminate health- and population-related research, and to encourage applied research and policy analysis from diverse global settings. Note also that *WHP* is indexed on MEDLINE and is accessible through PubMed. We look forward to continued enthusiastic submission of manuscripts for consideration, peer review and publication. Finally, the editors and publishers of *WHP* are always interested in any comments or suggestions you might have on the papers or the journal. Please feel free to write or email us.

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