Advances in Medicine, Psychology and Public Health (AMPPH)

Editor's Page

Bridging ethics and spirituality in healthcare policies for a holistic response to climate change, new pandemics and global health challenges: A call to action

Francesco CHIRICO[1*], Hicham KHABBACHE[2], Amelia RIZZO[3], Gabriella NUCERA[4], Murat YILDIRIM[5], Kavita BATRA[6], Mahmood BAHRAMIZADEH[7], Łukasz SZARPAK[8]

Cite this paper as: Chirico F, Khabbache H, Rizzo A, Nucera G, Yıldırım M, Batra K, Bahramizadeh M, Szarpak Ł. Bridging ethics and spirituality in healthcare policies for a holistic response to climate change, new pandemics, and global health challenges: A call to action. Adv Med Psychol Public Health. 2024;1(4):170-173.

Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.11068942

Received: 02 March 2024

Revised: 10 April 2024

Accepted: 25 April 2024

[1]Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, Post-graduate School in Occupational Health, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Rome, Italy. E-mail: medlavchirico@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0002-8737-4368

[2]Department of Psychology, Faculty of Literature and Human Science, Fès-Saïss, Morocco. E-mail: hichamcogn@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0001-9587-2829

[3]Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Italy. E-mail: amrizzo@unime.it ORCID: 0000-0002-6229-6463

[4]Fatebenefratelli Hospital, Milan, Italy. E-mail: gabriellanucera@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0003-1425-0046

[5]Department of Psychology, Agri Ibrahim Cecen University, Ağrı, Turkey. Department of Social and Educational Sciences, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon. E-mail: muratyildirim@agri.edu.tr ORCID: 0000-0003-1089-1380

[6]Department of Medical Education and Office of Research, Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at UNLV, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, United States of America. E-mail: kavita.batra@unlv.edu ORCID: 0000-0002-0722-0191

[7]Department of Orthotics and Prosthetics, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: ma.bahramizadeh@uswr.ac.ir ORCID: 0000-0003-4719-938x

[8]Institute of Outcomes Research, Maria Sklodowska-Curie Medical Academy, Warsaw, Poland. Maria Sklodowska-Curie Bialystok Oncology Center, Bialystok, Poland. Henry JN Taub Department of Emergency Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine Houston, Houston, TX, United States. Department of Clinical Research and Development, LUXMED Group, 02-676 Warsaw, Poland. E-mail: lukasz.szarpak@gmail.com ORCID: 0000-0002-0973-5455

**Correspondence*

Keywords: ethics; global challenges; holistic vision; human values; international collaboration; scientific research; spirituality.

Dear Readers,

Faced with alarming climate changes, global conflicts, mass migrations, and famines, we are confronting an unprecedented human and planetary crisis [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has been a challenge for overburdened and underdeveloped healthcare systems worldwide [2]. Given the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the weaknesses of a connected and globalized world, its consequences highlight a more alarming and enduring crisis that endangers our global community: climate change. Extreme weather events and global warming are affecting our physical and mental health, stressing our healthcare systems and exacerbating socioeconomic inequalities between and within countries, with the most vulnerable being the most affected [3].

Two critical spiritual dimensions have been studied in psychology: meaning and connection (and interdependence). When dealing with climate change, these two spiritual dimensions are particularly important since they connect with nature [3]. For instance, the eco-spirituality movement gathers people concerned with the current ecological crisis and views it as essentially a spiritual crisis of values [3]. Spirituality has been proposed as a weapon against the climate change challenge [4].

In an era of complex and interconnected crises, it is crucial to reconsider our approach to research and knowledge, integrating a holistic vision encompassing ethics and spirituality to guide us toward sustainable and compassionate solutions

[4]. In other words, global health challenges demand an innovative and multidimensional approach, harmonizing science with profound spiritual awareness [5].

The importance of ethics in healthcare policies

In an era of complex challenges, research should aim to improve health to promote the well-being of persons, communities, economic prosperity, and national development. Incorporating an ethical perspective not only strengthens the integrity of scientific research but also serves as a moral compass for scientists, transforming them into leaders capable of steering society towards more holistic and humanistic values. By juxtaposing an ethical approach against a materialistic and individualistic mindset, scientists can motivate political leaders and the public to adopt a more balanced and sustainable approach to life and contribute to tackling global health issues [1]. Ethical principles should guarantee for every person the right to health care. Universal health care is a term for various models of health care systems that provide care for every country resident [6]. However, the COVID-19 pandemic

has accelerated health and social care system privatization. In Italy, for example, from 2010 to 2019, the national health system experienced significant financial reductions, adding to years of austerity, regional division, and privatization that benefited private providers to the detriment of public services. This mainly affected primary care and social assistance, which substantially declined. Privatization led to deteriorated working conditions and a pronounced labour shortage in public institutions.

One lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic was that policymakers and governments engage in public health decisions based on the best available epidemiological evidence. Furthermore, the COVAX strategy, which intends to have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in every part of the world, including less developed countries, has been the promising approach to address global threats [7].

Therefore, economic investments in public healthcare systems and health education represent a priority for all countries to address income inequality and health inequity within and between countries [8] and are essential to address new pandemics and future threats challenging our healthcare capacity.

In the past, the H5N1 avian influenza viruses inflicted significant economic losses on the poultry industry and have caused zoonotic infections since 1997, raising concerns about its pandemic potential [9]. Therefore, adequate surveillance, development of vaccines, outbreak preparedness, and pandemic influenza planning are essential [10]. In addition, the scientific collaboration and coordination between scientists and the government play a critical role in disaster preparedness. In this vein, healthcare preparedness will also be essential, and policymakers must dedicate the necessary resources and start planning to address the ongoing imbalance between the supply and demand of physicians. The shortage of nurses and physicians requires innovative solutions, greater dependence on technology, and the incorporation of paramedical professionals to help redistribute tasks to help physicians. In hospitals with a high patient-to-healthcare provider ratio, the patients experience adverse outcomes, including higher mortality and failure-to-rescue rates as opposed to those hospital settings with lower patient-to-healthcare providers ratio [11].

Regrettably, ongoing armed conflicts in Europe, the Middle East Region, and other parts of the world are not only responsible for massive displacements and the destruction of economic, healthcare, and human infrastructure [12] but lead to investing money in weapons, diverting significant financial resources from health and healthcare systems, as well as disrupting collaboration between countries.

Bridging spirituality and ethics in the global health discourse

Different cultures have varied spiritual beliefs that affect their health practices. Spirituality has been described as an individual's connection to God, nature, others, and surroundings. Spirituality is associated with better quality and meaning in life [13]. Spirituality should be bridged into global health practice [14]. Many communities draw strength from their spiritual beliefs, which can be a source of resilience in facing health crises. The "One Health" approach, supporting the "human-animal-environment" interface to address shared health threats, such as zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety, and others, has been proposed for global health security and the Sustainable Development Goals [15]. Spiritual well-being, proposed to integrate the World Health Organization's (WHO's) health definition, should be considered in a holistic approach to health at individual and community levels [16] and be incorporated into the "One-Health" approach.

A science that bridges ethics and spirituality can better address these cultural differences, leading to more effective and respectful global health interventions. This is crucial in a world where health challenges cross borders and interventions adapted to diverse cultural contexts are warranted [17]. Ethically grounded and spiritually aware scientific approaches can leverage this resilience by engaging communities in ways that align with their values and beliefs, enhancing public health initiatives' effectiveness, acceptance, and human resilience.

Integrating spirituality and ethics into the scientific discourse can encourage policymakers and governments to develop holistic public health policies and guarantee care to every person [5]. These policies would aim to mitigate disease and enhance well-being, social justice, and ethical governance, aligning health initiatives with broader human values.

The urgency of international collaboration: A call for action

The need for collective and coordinated action is more desired than ever in the face of climate change, health crises, and social inequalities. An unprecedented international collaboration involving scientists, governments, and civil society is essential to generating innovative solutions and effective responses. This global synergy must be based on shared ethical and spiritual principles, redefining our approach to addressing world crises, such as wars and humanitarian emergencies. As part of this commitment, we unequivocally condemn all forms of warfare, advocating for peaceful resolutions and upholding human dignity in every conflict.

Only through international collaboration, guided by shared values, we can hope to tackle the interconnected challenges of our time. With this mission, the "*International Network for the Advancement of Medicine, Psychology, and Public Health"* was founded [18]. This network aims to unite associations, universities, and research groups that share values, such as respect for the environment, human dignity, and an ethical research approach. Adopting a humanistic and ethical perspective in medicine, the psychological, educational, and social sciences, and public health can guide human development and overcome global challenges [19].

In the face of these momentous challenges, we extend an open invitation to individual researchers, research groups, universities, foundations, and other entities engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and the betterment of humanity to contribute to our journal [19] and join the *"International Network for the Advancement of Medicine, Psychology, and Public Health*."

We seek your invaluable insights, innovative research, and committed action.

Scientists cannot and should not operate in isolation. It necessitates guidance based on ethical and spiritual principles and close international collaboration. Only through this integrated approach, we will be able to face and overcome the challenges ahead.

Funding: This research did not receive any external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgements: None.

Conflicts of Interest: FC is the Editor in Chief of AMPPH. The other authors are Associate Editors and Editorial Board Members of AMPPH.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The Publisher remains neutral regarding jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations. Additionally, the Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy, completeness, or validity of the content in scientific articles published herein. This statement exempts the Publisher from any responsibility regarding the content of scientific articles, which is solely the responsibility of the authors and peer reviewers.

References

1. Chirico F, Nowrouzi-Kia B. Post-COVID-19 Syndrome and new challenges posed by climate change require an interdisciplinary approach: The role of occupational health services. J Health Soc Sci. 2022;7(2):132-136.doi: 10.19204/2022/PSTC1.
2. Ejaz M, Syed MA. COVID-19 third wave: a challenge for overburdened and underdeveloped healthcare system of Pakistan. Turk J Med Sci. 2021 Oct;51(5):2789-2791. doi: 10.3906/sag-2103-359.
3. Bellehumeur CR, Bilodeau C, Kam C. Integrating positive psychology and spirituality in the context of climate change. Front Psychol. 2022 Sep 9; 13:970362. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.970362.
4. Chirico F. Spirituality to cope with COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and future global challenges. J Health Soc Sci. 2021;6(2):151-158. doi:10.19204/2021/sprt2.
5. Tarchi L, Crescenzo P, Castellini G, Ricca V, Talamonti K, Rispoli F, et al. Volunter-aholism: A comprehensive model of personality, burnout, and mental distress in a sample of healthcare first responders of the Italian Red Cross Auxiliary Corps. J Health Soc Sci. 2023;8(2):103-120. doi: 10.19204/2023/VLNT3.
6. Alspaugh A, Lanshaw N, Kriebs J, Van Hoover C. Universal Health Care for the United States: A Primer for Health Care Providers. J Midwifery Womens Health. 2021 Jul;66(4):441-451. doi: 10.1111/jmwh.13233. Epub 2021 Jun 24.
7. Aliyu AA. Public health ethics and the COVID-19 pandemic. Ann Afr Med. 2021 Jul-Sep;20(3):157-163. doi: 10.4103/aam.aam_80_20.
8. Bhattacharjee A, Shin JK, Subramanian C, Swaminathan S. Healthcare investment and income inequality. J Health Econ. 2017 Dec; 56:163-177. doi: 10.1016/j.jhealeco.2017.08.007
9. Krammer F, Schultz-Cherry S. We need to keep an eye on avian influenza. Nat Rev Immunol. 2023 May;23(5):267-268. doi: 10.1038/s41577-023-00868-8.
10. Trampuz A, Prabhu RM, Smith TF, Baddour LM. Avian influenza: a new pandemic threat? Mayo Clin Proc. 2004 Apr;79(4):523-30; quiz 530. doi: 10.4065/79.4.523. Erratum in: Mayo Clin Proc. 2004 Jun;79(6):833
11. Haddad LM, Annamaraju P, Toney-Butler TJ. Nursing Shortage. [Updated 2023 Feb 13]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2024 Jan. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493175/. Accessed 20 April 2024.
12. Joshi M. Comprehensive peace agreement implementation and reduction in neonatal, infant and under-5 mortality rates in post-armed conflict states, 1989-2012. BMC Int Health Hum Rights. 2015 Oct 8; 15:27. doi: 10.1186/s12914-015-0066-7.
13. Paul Victor CG, Treschuk JV. Critical Literature Review on the Definition Clarity of the Concept of Faith, Religion, and Spirituality. J Holist Nurs. 2020 Mar;38(1):107-113. doi: 10.1177/0898010119895368.
14. Addiss DG. Spiritual Themes and Challenges in Global Health. J Med Humanit. 2018 Sep;39(3):337-348. doi: 10.1007/s10912-015-9378-9.

15. Sinclair JR. Importance of a One Health approach in advancing global health security and the Sustainable Development Goals. Rev Sci Tech. 2019 May;38(1):145-154. doi: 10.20506/rst.38.1.2949.
16. Trudel-Fitzgerald C, Millstein RA, von Hippel C, Howe CJ, Tomasso LP, Wagner GR, et al. Psychological well-being as part of the public health debate? Insight into dimensions, interventions, and policy. BMC Public Health. 2019 Dec 19;19(1):1712. doi: 10.1186/s12889-019-8029-x.
17. Makkaoui M, Hannoun Fz, Ouazizi K, Rizzo A, Driss Ai, Cherqui A, et al Spirituality as predictor of well-being at work in the moroccan context. Research Square. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-4223777/v1.
18. Chirico F. The "*International Network for the Advancement of Medicine, Psychology, and Public Health*": Pioneering progress in medicine and social development. Adv Med Psychol Public Health. 2024;1(2):51-52. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.10632950.
19. Chirico F. Welcome to "Advances in Medicine, Psychology, and Public Health". Adv Med Psychol Public Health. 2024;1(2):1-2. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.10594693.

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for possible open-access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).