

## Global Health Network Overview

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Ebola virus, breast cancer, homicide, war, famine, AIDs...Is the world becoming sicker? Most definitely not. If we examine life expectancy, it is clear that remarkable improvements in health have occurred this century. In almost all developed and most developing countries there has been a 25 year increase in life expectancy. This increase is greater than that which we have seen at any time in the world. The increased longevity was almost exclusively due to public health. It has been estimated that almost 24 of the 25 year increase was due to simple public health measures such as sanitation, immunization, changing life styles, improved nutrition, etc. The first two eras of public health this century were that of sanitation and immunization. The 3<sup>rd</sup> age will be that of Information, which will begin in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Public Health is information transfer. Public Health scientists read literature and talk with colleagues to generate ideas. They write grants to obtain resources to conduct research. Public health research is information, research as data collection, analysis and manuscript preparation are all information transmission. Public health researchers publish results to transmit information to our colleagues and the world. Results are read by public health workers to improve health, and surveys monitor what if any effects these public health measures have upon health.

The problem is that the technologies that form the backbone of public health information transmission in general are antiquated, the telephone, postal systems and fax. We now are in an information revolution where rapid, almost free, transmission of data is now available. If public health were to harness this revolution, there could be a rapid improvement in public health.

We have begun a discipline called tele-preventive medicine. This discipline consists of the use of the Internet to bring and collect quantities of information from large number of healthy people to prevent disease. It is different from tele-medicine which targets high band width information to a small number of sick people to "cure" disease. It is likely that a telepreventive medicine