

Report of the Public Health side event of the Heidelberg Alumni International 20-year Anniversary programme, 15.07.2016, 15:00 – 19:00 hrs, Neue Universität, Heidelberg, Germany

In the context of the Heidelberg Alumni International (HAI) 20-year Anniversary celebrations, the Institute of Public Health (IPH) and its alumni network, organised a side event to discuss current public health issues.

With an audience of more than 50 participants, Professor Emeritus Hans-Jochen Diesfeld, previous head of the IPH, delivered a fascinating lecture on “Ethics and research in the international context”. In his lecture, Professor Diesfeld underlined that research with human participants in Low and Middle Income Countries should follow the same international standards as in wealthy countries, as for example Good Clinical Practices (GCP) for clinical trials. However the reality is often quite different.

The session addressed the longstanding debate of ethics in research with human participants, not only in the area of clinical research but in any health, social and anthropological research involving participants, their families and communities. Research ethics should also address the question of so-called distribution-ethics, i.e. who benefits from the research results.

The following discussion showed clearly that the link between ethics and quality has been discussed already for many years, but implementation remains an issue. The IPH Teaching Unit follows up on this discussion with a course on Good Health Research Practices, developed with the World Health Organization’s Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO/TDR), essentially trying to ensure embedding ethics and quality in all public health research.

Professor Diesfeld’s lecture was followed by a panel discussion lead by Professor Albrecht Jahn (IPH) on “Migration and Health in the context of Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030“. The panelists, all experts in different areas of the field concerned, discussed 1. the health situation of migrants from a global perspective, including international legal frameworks and treaties, 2. Universal Health Coverage for Migrants on regional and country level, and 3. Health and health care for migrants in and around Heidelberg. The open discussion with the audience showed clearly a knowledge gap, but even more an implementation gap even for easy interventions to safeguard the health of migrants, both globally, but also in the local context.

Professor Albrecht follows up on this project with a university-wide action group to address the current local health situation of migrants in Heidelberg, but also further global research.

Overall the public health side event was very well attended, and the discussions evolving underlined that public health can highlight problems – but also offer solutions – for health issues on the meta-level, but also on very practical issues.

In a small PH alumni network meeting following the event, members of the HAI-net PH alumni group had the opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues, exchange

information and provide valuable feedback. The next bigger PH alumni events will be taking place in the context of a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD – for its acronyms in German) sponsored Global Mental Health Summer School in Heidelberg from 12 – 16.09.16 and the Annual Graduation Ceremony of the IPH, 16.09 14:00 Alte Aula in Heidelberg.

Lecture Emeritus Professor Hans-Jochen Diesfeld



Panel discussion with Prof Albrecht Jahn and panelists from left to right: Prof Hans-Jochen Diesfeld, Dr Shorouk Haidar Ahmad (MSciH Student), Dr Sandra Claudia Gewalt, MSc (University Hospital Heidelberg) and Dr Kayvan Bozorgmehr, MSc (University Hospital Heidelberg)

