

GLOBALIZATION101.ORG

Unit on Globalization and Health

Introduction

In this lesson, students will learn about the political, economic, and social effects of disease, looking particularly at those effects on developing countries. They will learn about the ways in which globalization has affected health around the world and about international public health officials' suggested responses to the spread of infectious disease. Students will participate in a role-playing exercise about providing cheap medications to poor countries.

Student Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of the spread of infectious diseases.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of terms related to the study of global health.
3. Identify political, social, and economic effects of rising incidences of infectious diseases.
4. Define and explain the most important ways that global health has been affected by globalization.
5. Evaluate the degree to which global health concerns are a cause of globalization or merely global health issues that have global significance.
6. Enumerate and describe suggested methods of responding to increasing global health concerns.

Materials

1. Copies of Handout 1, "Seven Ways Globalization Has Affected Health"
2. Copies of Handout 2, "Developed Countries Agree to Increase Access to HIV/AIDS Drugs for Poor Nations"

Time Required

3 classes (excluding time allowed for preparation of final role play)

Procedure

Introductory Discussion

1. Begin the unit with the history of the spread of diseases. Have students read the section on "Diseases and Human History" from the Health Issue Brief. This can be done either on the computer or in print, depending on student access to computers. To begin the discussion of the topic, quote John Snow in "On the Mode of Communication of Cholera" (1849): "Epidemics of cholera follow major routes of commerce. The disease always appears first at seaports when extending into islands or continents." Ask the

students to discuss the significance of this statement. Why would an epidemic follow routes of trade and commerce?

2. Next, discuss how in modern times globalization has led to the rapid spread of diseases around the world. Explain to students that according to some estimates, at the time of European colonization of the Americas, plagues such as smallpox and measles could travel around the world within the span of a year. What do they think the time span is now? How can disease spread so quickly? Ask students why such quick travel can be so threatening as it relates to diseases.
3. Next, have students read “Diseases Go Global.” This can be done either on the computer or in print, depending on student access to computers. Based on this section, lead a discussion about the ramifications of rising incidences of infectious diseases. Write the following terms on the board to help prompt students:
 - economic consequences
 - political consequences
 - societal impacts
 - governmental responsibilities.
4. Pose this question to the students: If the spread of infectious diseases has been around for centuries, why does it seem like this is a relatively new phenomenon? What do students think has drawn increased attention to global diseases?

Activity 1

1. Have students read the Health Issue Brief section entitled, “Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health.” This can be done either on-line or in printed-out format, depending on student access to computers.
2. Pass out the list of “Seven Ways Globalization Has Affected Health.” Divide the class into seven groups and assign each group one of the items on the list:
 - increased travel
 - increased trade
 - food-borne illnesses
 - urbanization
 - climate change and other environmental concerns
 - microbial drug resistance
 - breakdowns in public health systems.

3. Based on information from the Health Brief, groups should:
 - write a brief summary of the issue;
 - decide if the issue is a result of globalization, simply a global issue, or somewhere in-between; and
 - write an explanation for its conclusion.

Ask students to think about the following question: To what extent is the issue the result of policy decisions that pertain to globalization versus being a result of other, local factors?

4. When the groups have completed the task, ask each group to present its issue to the rest of the class. Groups should summarize the issue first, using a group member to write significant points on the board.
5. After each group has presented its ideas, ask the students if they think slowing down globalization would lead to an improvement in any of these problems or potentially worsen the problems. How would such a slowdown be accomplished—government policies, individual choices, or international cooperation? What kinds of policies could achieve such a slowdown?

Activity 2: Role-Playing Exercise

5. As a way to draw together the various issues involved in the lesson on globalization and health, students will participate in a role play. This group activity will focus on providing drugs to combat AIDS to poor countries.
6. Pass out copies of the Globalization101.org News Report entitled “Developed Countries Agree to Increase Access to HIV/AIDS Drugs for Poor Nations” to each student or have them read it on-line at http://globalization101.org/news.asp?NEWS_ID=26 . Either have students read the report to themselves or go through the report aloud, pointing out what the TRIPS agreement states, what criticisms developing countries have of TRIPS, and the counterarguments of developed countries.
7. Divide students into 4 groups representing (1) the government of the United States, (2) Oxfam (a British confederation of non-governmental organizations involved in fighting disease spread in developing countries), (3) Merck (a multinational pharmaceutical company), and (4) the government of South Africa. These four groups are meeting at a UN-sponsored summit to discuss effective methods of stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. While there is agreement that the disease is a problem that needs immediate attention, there is disagreement among the four parties as to the appropriate and feasible international response. The four groups also disagree sharply as to who should bear the financial and administrative burdens of carrying out any program.

8. Have students use the Globalization101.org website to research the positions of each of the parties to this dispute. They can do this in-class, at home, or at a library, depending on the availability of computers and on your preference for having students do homework or in-class work. Students should explore the links to international organizations, governments, and media outlets in the Health Issue Brief, the News Report, and in the Links section of the site and should explore the material in the CSIS Projects section on health, particularly the publications of the CSIS HIV/AIDS Task Force.
9. With this background, students must decide on a response to the crisis and write a two-page proposal outlining such a response. Let students know that you expect their proposals to realistically reflect the constraints and interests of the group they represent. They will have to discuss in their groups what their interests are and even consider what those of the other groups are.
10. The day of the simulation, the teacher will play UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is presiding over the conference. Each group will have 10 minutes to present its proposal (ask groups to split this time among team members, rather than designating one spokesperson). After each team presents their proposals, the teacher should begin the discussion by raising any points of clarification or asking students to respond to each others' proposals. Groups are then given 15 minutes to negotiate with each other to try to reach agreement on a proposal (given class length, this role play may need to carry over into a second day). At the end of the 15 minutes, groups are given 10 minutes to draft a new position that reflects any compromise or proposal that may have been agreed to during the negotiations phase.
11. After this period, you will again ask the groups to present their positions briefly, and then, as convener of the conference, work with the groups for a final 15 minutes to see if you can locate points of agreement or compromise that can serve as the basis for a joint proposal.

Extending the activity: Students can be asked to then write a two-page follow-up report that details their insights from the role-play, either in terms of the difficulty of finding common ground or of creating a program that is both feasible and effective. If a proposal was agreed to, the follow-up report should focus on how the proposal would be implemented in practice: what is needed before a program can be carried out, who will pay for and administer the program, and how will its effectiveness be monitored?

Conclusion

After the role-play activity is completed, you should provide some concluding remarks on the impact of globalization on health. One point that the Health Issue Brief makes illustrates the predicament nicely: the challenge of addressing international public health issues is in many ways similar to the concern about global warming. Although improvements in global public health benefit everyone, the costs are often borne by individual countries, so there is less incentive by lesser-affected countries to make big investments. Compounding this problem is that the countries with the biggest public health problems typically have the fewest resources to

respond to them. The world's 60 poorest nations spend an average of \$13 per person on health care per year. The World Health Organization recommends that this number should rise to \$34 per person. By way of comparison, the United States spends \$4,500 on health care per person per year. Ask students what they would recommend to make health care spending more balanced. Do they think that requiring developed, wealthier countries to spend more money on improved international public health system is fair? Do students agree with the argument that any effective response to the spread of global diseases must be global? Who would coordinate this effort? How would students prioritize their efforts if they were in charge: would they spend more money on prevention, treatment, or research? Would they allocate more money to particular countries than to others?