

Equitable access to influenza vaccines not in sight

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In a Policy Forum article that continues the *PLoS Medicine* series on Global Health Diplomacy, David Fidler (Indiana University School of Law) provides a case study of the negotiations to increase access to vaccines for influenza strains that suggest the goal of equitable access is far from certain.

The article, published this week in *PLoS Medicine*, examines why negotiating equitable access to [influenza](#) vaccines in the context of highly pathogenic avian influenza A (HPAI-H5N1) and pandemic 2009 influenza A (2009-H1N1) has been one of the most controversial areas of global health diplomacy over the past five years. The lack of agreement about benefit sharing, the divergence of interests between developed and developing countries, and the absence of a suitable global access framework and relevant international law means that negotiations will continue to be difficult, says the author.

The author concludes that "the need to increase global production capacity, diversify locales for manufacturing facilities, decrease the time from "lab to jab," and reduce production and distribution uncertainties, has been recognized for years without sufficient progress being made, as evidenced by the HPAI-H5N1 and 2009-H1N1 controversies. Further research is required on ways in which states and non-state actors can address these problems through negotiated collective action."

The *PLoS Medicine* Global Health Diplomacy series began with the publication on 20 April 2010 of an introductory article by Harley

Feldbaum and Joshua Michaud, and a case study of Brazil's growing leadership in international relations by Kelley Lee and colleagues. A case study examining whether the [SARS epidemic](#) was a "watershed" for China's engagement in global health diplomacy by Lai-Ha Chan from the University of Technology Sydney and colleagues from Peking University followed on 27 April 2010.

The [PLoS Medicine](#) series concludes on 11 May 2010 with commentary from high-level diplomats providing critical insights into the challenges of engaging in global health diplomacy.

The guest editor of the Global Health Diplomacy Series is Dr. Kelley Lee who can be contacted for press queries.

More information: Fidler DP (2010) Negotiating Equitable Access to Influenza Vaccines: Global Health Diplomacy and the Controversies Surrounding Avian Influenza H5N1 and Pandemic Influenza H1N1. PLoS Med 7(5): e1000247. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000247](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000247)

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