

# Blurring of national security interests and global health agendas are an unavoidable reality

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Society must align the overlapping priorities and often clashing interests of medical intelligence, national security agendas and the global health community, according to global health advocates writing in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. The authors of the review paper, from the King's Centre for Global Health, Conflict and Health Research, describe a pathway which, they say, will limit the blurring of the boundaries between medical intelligence, the securitisation of health threats such as Ebola and SARS and foreign policy action.

The pathway the authors are advocating relies on medical intelligence first highlighting [health threats](#) that have implications for national security before policy action takes place. The authors say that failure to follow this pathway in the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 clearly demonstrates the adverse consequences of initiatives that blur foreign policy concerns with medical initiatives. The CIA operation to locate and kill Osama Bin Laden took place by creating a fake childhood Hepatitis B immunisation programme in Abbottabad, Pakistan. This resulted in a large-scale reduction in childhood vaccination uptake.

Research fellow and lead author Gemma Bowsher said: "In a [global health](#) security agenda, the involvement of intelligence structures best occurs to anticipate and evaluate health risks, rather than, as seen in this instance, create them."

The authors conclude: "As the concept of a global health [security](#) agenda gains traction, the fields of intelligence and public health, in addition to the humanitarian community and the military, will necessarily have to accept an overlapping of their respective discourses and a sharing of goals."

**More information:** Medical intelligence, security and global health: The foundations of a new health agenda ( [DOI: 10.1177/0141076816656483](#) ) by G Bowsher, C Milner and R Sullivan, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 7 July 2016.

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