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Making a Difference in Bioethics

THE GLOBAL HEALTH IMPACT INDEX

January 30, 2015 · by impact ethics · in Health Research, International Healthcare, Public Health, Uncategorized · [Leave a comment](#)

Nicole Hassoun and Priya Bhimani outline the benefits of the recently developed Global Health Impact index.

For much of 2014, the Ebola outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa dominated headlines as the virus spread and eventually made its way to the United States and Europe. Unfortunately, while the world focused on graphic



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images of people dying from Ebola on the street, little attention was paid to other infectious diseases that continue to plague much of the developing world.

As media coverage of the Ebola outbreak slowly started to decline, however, news of a new strain of drug-resistant malaria started to catch the public's attention. Drug-resistance is a silent but serious threat to public health. And, if drug-resistant malaria were to spread from its current location in Myanmar to the nearby nations of India and China, it could easily become the world's next big global health emergency.

More generally, every year millions of people die from malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDs – aptly named neglected diseases. This fact invites the following questions: What efforts to combat these neglected diseases are working? Where is help still needed? And, what initiatives are actually making a difference?

A new [Global Health Impact](#) index, supported by a collaboration of university-based researchers and civil society organizations around the world, helps provide answers to these questions. The [index](#) evaluates the global health impact of particular drugs. This information can be used to increase awareness about particular diseases, and create national and international demand for drugs to treat these diseases.



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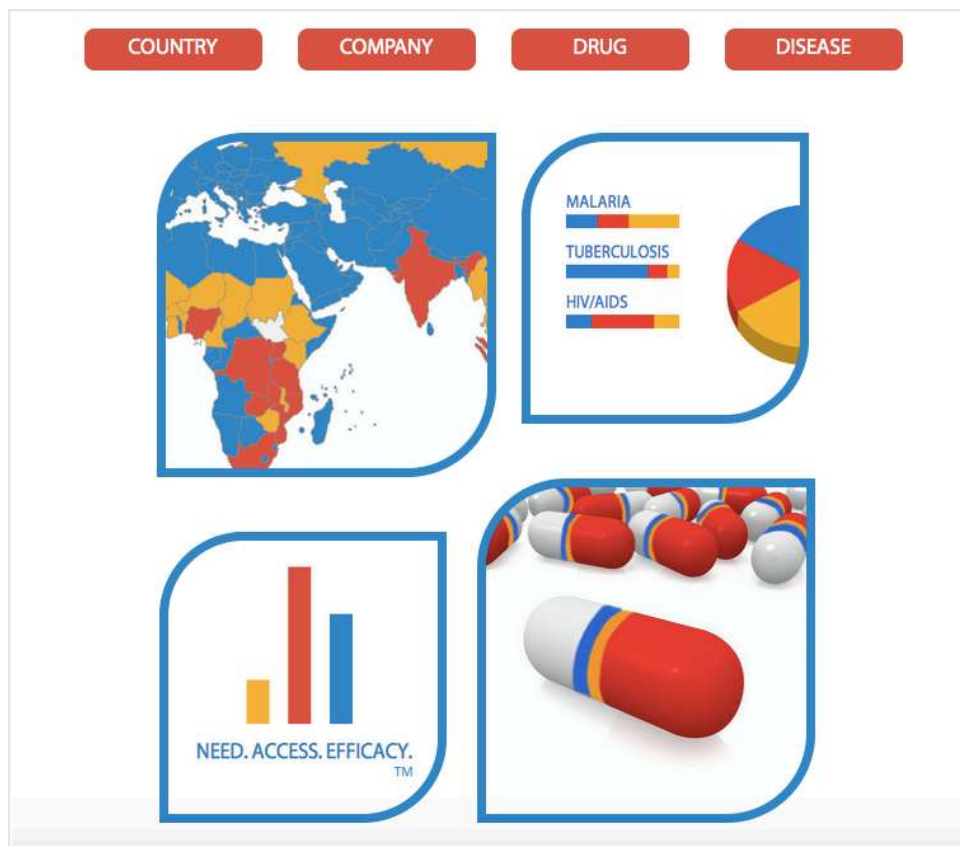
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A drug's global health impact is determined by compiling information about: (1) the need for the drug; (2) access to the drug; and (3) effectiveness of the drug. In this way, the Global Health Impact index makes it possible to estimate the [impact of each drug](#) in each country, as well as the global impact of particular drugs on specific diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

The Global Health Impact index has the potential to promote the development of new drugs that save lives. The information the index provides is useful for setting targets, evaluating progress on development, and rewarding good performance. Governments, international organizations, and pharmaceutical companies can all use the index to [increase their global health impact](#).

According to [Pascal Ringwald](#) of the WHO's Global Malaria Programme, "We need to act fast to avoid a big catastrophe. The consequences could be disastrous." Ringwald is referring to the possibility of drug-resistant malaria spreading out of Myanmar, but his statement applies equally to situations involving millions who are afflicted with other painful and deadly diseases. As people in the

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Western world have started to pay attention to global public health issues, we must take advantage of this window of opportunity and shed light on efforts to increase access to essential medicines.

For news about the Global Health Impact project, see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Nicole Hassoun is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Binghamton University. She heads the Global Health Impact project.

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Tags: drugs, Global Health Impact, HIV/ AIDS, Malaria, Nicole Hassoun, Priya Bhimani, Tuberculosis

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