



HOW WHO MANAGED TO IGNORE TROPICAL MEDICINE DURING ITS EARLY DECADES

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Abstract

As already indicated in the announcement for this meeting, the history of WHO's global malaria eradication campaign is well documented. Less so is why tropical medicine did not emerge as a top priority in WHO's early programs. There is no simple answer to this question but there are a number of factors that stand out, the most important of which was the lack of any strong institutional advocacy for tropical medicine along with an extremely limited knowledge of the tropics among the global health leaders of that time with the exception of those like Fred Soper and Paul Russell who were deeply responsible for the global malaria campaign.

My presentation will focus on what were the major interests of the non-tropical global health leaders, how these interests ill-served the needs of tropical areas, and how and why opportunities favorable for tropical medicine were not taken advantage of. In addition, I will look more closely at WHO's involvement in tropical Africa where despite the failure of malaria eradication programs the public health agenda that did emerge for Africa was poorly suited for the development of health services best suited for tropical conditions.