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CGHE

Center for Global Health Engagement

ISSUE 1
JULY 2023

DoD GHE Snapshot

GLOBAL HEALTH V.S. GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT

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The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' (USU's) Center for Global Health Engagement (CGHE) is pleased to share the first issue of the Department of Defense Global Health Engagement (DoD GHE) Snapshot. The DoD GHE Snapshot is intended to create self-publishing opportunities for GHE professionals to share knowledge and experiences and learn from one another in real time. We hope you enjoy this inaugural copy and please refer to our social media and website for real time updates.

GLOBAL HEALTH V.S. GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT



Are Department of Defense (DoD) Global Health Engagement (GHE) activities synonymous with U.S. Government (USG) led Global Health (GH) initiatives? Are these two terms interchangeable? The short answer is no.

On one hand, DoD GHE has a very distinct definition and purpose. It is unique to the U.S. Armed Forces context and is very clearly defined within DoD Instruction 2000.30. Specifically, DoD GHE activities are the “interaction between individuals or elements of DoD and those of a Partner Nation’s (PN’s) armed forces or civilian authorities, in coordination with other USG departments and agencies, to build trust and confidence, share information, coordinate mutual activities, maintain influence, and achieve interoperability in health-related activities that support U.S. national security policy and military strategy.” DoD GHE is how healthcare practitioners within the DoD can leverage health tools as a means of engaging our partners to meet U.S. strategic objectives and contribute to the health and wellbeing of military and civilian populations.

On the other hand, USG-led GHE and GH in general does not have a standard, agreed-upon definition. Koplan et al. acknowledge the need for one and propose: “an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving health equity for all people worldwide.”¹ They go on to argue GH is also distinct from its derivations in public health (PH) and international health (IH) and “additional stakeholders have since elaborated varied definitions of GH, yet consensus around its precise definition remains elusive.”²

Two notable USG agencies working in the GH arena define it in their own terms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states “a disease threat anywhere is a disease threat everywhere” and actively works “to protect Americans from dangerous and costly public health concerns...responding when and where health threats arise.”³ The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) states their “[GH] programs have saved lives, protected people most vulnerable to disease, and promoted the stability of communities and nations....America is safer and stronger when people can live healthy and productive lives and when nations around the world are self-reliant and resilient.”⁴ At the multinational level, the World Health Organization (WHO) “leads and champions global efforts to give everyone, everywhere an equal chance to live a healthy life.”⁵



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3. <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/index.html>
4. <https://www.usaid.gov/global-health>
5. <https://www.who.int/about>

There are clearly common themes, but still no universally agreed upon definition for GH. The distinctions between GH and DoD GHE are identified and discussed in greater detail early in CGHE's Fundamental of Global Health Engagement (FOGHE) course; with the insistence that DoD GHE should not be labeled or referred to as GH. While they are not the same, DoD GHE may and often does overlap with some activities in the GH space; conversely, GH efforts might also include the concept of “engagement” or “health engagement,” with a connotation distinctly different from DoD's understanding of health as a tool to achieve other objectives.

In the end, while there may be overlaps and similarities, DoD GHE is not the same as and should not be referred to as GH.

Understanding the differences and the impetus behind DoD GHE programs and activities is a necessary and purposeful start to designing GHE efforts to meet DoD strategic intent while also enabling positive outcomes for health purposes.



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