

# Developing a Primer for Quality Improvement in Global Health

Caitlin Visek, MD<sup>1</sup> Ashti Doobay-Persaud, MD<sup>2, 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine <sup>2</sup>Department of Hospital Medicine, Northwestern Memorial Hospital <sup>3</sup>Institute for Global Health, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine

## Introduction

- Quality is increasingly recognized as an imperative of health systems
- Many trainees and early career practitioners are interested in improving the quality of health care delivery in a global health context
- Despite a growing recognition of the importance of quality, few resources exist to guide practitioners undertaking global health projects.
- There is mounting recognition of the potential harms and asymmetric partnerships often inherent in short-term global health experiences

## Goals / Objectives

- We aimed to create a primer to facilitate ethical and effective quality improvement work in global settings and assemble existing resources with annotated bibliography of the literature
- We are also developing a framework for best practices for partnering on quality improvement projects

## Complicated Ethics of Global Health Work

- There has been increasing recognition of the colonial history of global health and the dangers inherent in short-term global health work<sup>2-4</sup>
- Partnerships between institutions in low- and high-income are often asymmetric
- Ethical principles have been proposed to ensure that work benefits the intended recipients

### Four Principles of Meaningful Global Health Engagement<sup>2</sup>

Service      Sustainability      Professionalism      Safety

## Educational Resources

- Resources to be posted on the Northwestern Center for Global Health website:
  - **Brief overview** of key quality improvement and global health concepts
  - Links to helpful **resources** for QI design and implementation
  - Compendium of global health QI **projects** in the literature for reference

## Next Steps

- Eliciting feedback on the proposed framework from global health and quality improvement experts at Northwestern
- Planning for a future study with interviews of leaders at partner sites to assess partners' perceptions of global health rotators, utility of quality improvement projects, and best practices for short-term experiences

## Conclusions

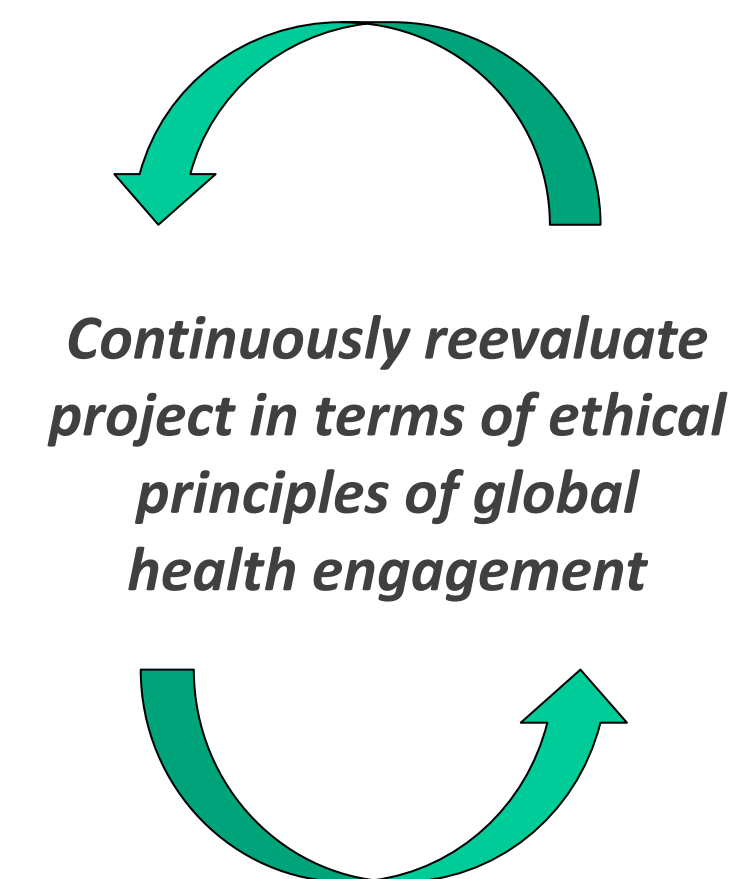
- Global health work, particularly short-term projects, can be ethically fraught
- Little has been published in the literature on best practices for approaching quality improvement work in global health
- Additional resources and frameworks are needed to establish best practices for quality improvement in global health

## References

1. World Health Organization, *Everybody's Business: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Health Outcomes*, 2007.
2. Pinto, A. and R.E.G Upshar, "Global health ethics for students," *Developing World Bioethics* 2009 Apr;9(1):1-10.
3. Consortium of Universities for Global Health, "Global Health Education Competencies Tool-Kit," 2018, accessed 5/30/21 <https://1cnvnq2oul8e2upwpp47ustn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/95/2020/05/CUGH-Global-Health-Toolkit-Web-Version.pdf>.
4. Wilson, Merry, and Franz, "Rules of Engagement: The Principles of Underserved Global Health Volunteerism," *Am J Med.* 2012 Jun; 125(6): 612–617

## Proposed Framework for Approaching QI in Global Health

1. Elicit priorities from host site
2. Select a project that will maximize benefit and minimize burden for partner
3. Project implementation – can follow Model for Improvement or other QI methodology
4. Hand-off phase – ensure that host will be able to maintain changes over the long-run



## Quality in the Global Health Context<sup>1</sup>

### THE WHO HEALTH SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

#### SYSTEM BUILDING BLOCKS

SERVICE DELIVERY  
HEALTH WORKFORCE  
INFORMATION  
MEDICAL PRODUCTS, VACCINES & TECHNOLOGIES  
FINANCING  
LEADERSHIP / GOVERNANCE

ACCESS  
COVERAGE  
QUALITY  
SAFETY

#### OVERALL GOALS / OUTCOMES

IMPROVED HEALTH (LEVEL AND EQUITY)  
RESPONSIVENESS  
SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL RISK PROTECTION  
IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

Quality as a key mediator of health system outcomes