

Research Seminar Series

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Thursday October 15, 2009, 11:00am

Million Death Study Prabhat Jha, MD, PhD

Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto

Seminar Description:

Over 75% of the annual estimated 9.5 million deaths in India occur in the home, and the large majority of these do not have a certified cause. India and other developing countries urgently need reliable quantification of the causes of death. They also need better epidemiological evidence about the relevance of physical (such as blood pressure and obesity), behavioral (such as smoking, alcohol, HIV-1 risk taking, and immunization history), and biological (such as blood lipids and gene polymorphisms) measurements to the development of disease in individuals or disease rates in populations. We report here on the rationale, design, and implementation of the world's largest prospective study of the causes and correlates of mortality.

Results: Preliminary results from over 30,000 deaths suggest that the verbal autopsy can ascertain the leading causes of death, reduce the misclassification of causes and derive the probable underlying cause of death when it has not been reported. Verbal autopsy yields broad classification of the underlying causes in about 90% of deaths before age 70. In old age, however, the proportion of classifiable deaths is substantially lower. By tracking underlying demographic *denominators* the study permits quantification of absolute mortality rates. *Household case-control*, *proportional mortality* and *nested* case-control methods permit quantification of risk factors.

Guest Speaker Biography:

Prabhat Jha is Canada Research Chair of Health and Development and Professor at the University of Toronto. He is the founding director of the Centre for Global Health Research CGHR (www.cghr.org), St. Michael's Hospital; and professeur extraordinaire at the Université de Lausanne, Switzerland. Professor Jha is lead author of *Curbing the Epidemic: Governments and the Economics of Tobacco Control* and is co-editor of *Tobacco Control in Developing Countries*. Both are among the most influential books on tobacco control, with the first being translated into over 20 languages. He is the principal investigator of the "Million Death Study" in India, which examines child and adult mortality and their risk factors in 2.3 million homes and 15 million people. He also conducts studies of HIV transmission in various countries, co-editor of the Disease Control Priorities Project, and advises several governments and institutions. Since being founded in 2002, the Centre for Global Health Research (CGHR) has expanded to 30 staff in Toronto, Bangalore and New Delhi, and has recently opened the Lombard Insurance Global Poverty Action Lab in Toronto. Professor Jha holds an M.D. from the University of Manitoba and a D. Phil. in epidemiology and public health from Oxford University, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar.



Health Sciences Building

155 College Street, Room 610
Toronto, ON M5T 3M7

For more information contact:

stephanie.dorego@utoronto.ca

Tel: *1 (416) 978-8606



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