

EMERGING HEALTH THREATS FORUM

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Emerging Health Threats Forum (EHTF) is a not-for-profit, scientific-based information service the purpose of which is to *identify, assess, and to promote solutions* to emerging threats to human health from all sources, including the environment, chemicals, radiation, pathogens, and society.

EHTF has been set up in close collaboration with the UK's Health Protection Agency (HPA) and includes HPA divisional directors on its Scientific Advisory Council and on the Editorial Board of *Emerging Health Threats Journal*.

Emerging threats to human health are constantly evolving, and their scale is huge. For example:

- Pandemic flu: the WHO says a pandemic would affect more than 1.5bn people, or 25% of the world's population.
- Emerging infectious diseases: at least 39 new pathogens have been identified since 1967, including HIV, Ebola, haemorrhagic fever, Marburg fever, and SARS.
- Drug resistance: already problematic, this is something that is due to escalate with the over-prescription of antibiotics to 700m people now within China's healthcare system.
- Globalization is speeding up the transmission of disease while climate change is widening the geographical range of diseases.
- Threats to agriculture from (for instance) climate change could have a large impact on human health, and the interface between humans and animals is a key source of emerging health risk.
- The open-ended development of science, coupled with the radicalization of sections of society, is increasing the risk from mass-destruction terrorism.

WHY EMERGING HEALTH THREATS FORUM IS SPECIAL

Other organizations, with the World Health Organization leading the field, are charged with looking at issues of public health. Equally there are many existing outlets for the publication of new science. However, the unique contribution that **EHTF** makes to the cause of global public health stems from five key attributes that together distinguish it from all other ostensibly similar organizations:

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First, its focus is solely on *new and emerging health threats*, leaving issues relating to established threats to others. Its primary mission is to ensure that the threat from the *next AIDS* is recognized and acted upon in good time.

Second, **EHTF**'s concern is with *all* sources of new, re-emerging, and changing health threats, not just infectious diseases. This is of particular benefit to policymakers and fund-holders trying to assess the relative seriousness of emerging health threats.

Third, **EHTF** brings together in one place *all the elements* that are necessary to help policymakers and fund-holders reach informed decisions about new and emerging threats, including long-term comparative risk assessments; original peer-reviewed research; and the aggregation and critical reviewing of research published elsewhere.

Fourth, through its *Emerging Health Threats Monitor* **EHTF** provides a valuable weekly summary of relevant scientific and health-risk developments for interested but non-scientific users in the international business community.

And, fifth, **EHTF**'s peer-reviewed scientific journal – *Emerging Health Threats Journal* – is open access both to users and to authors. It does not charge fees to authors as most “open-access” journals do.

The open-access nature of **Emerging Health Threats Forum** enables it to engage fully with the developing world. This is important not just because the adverse effects of emerging health threats so often fall disproportionately on the developing world, but also because many new and emerging health threats have their origins in the developing world. It is thus critical to engage fully with developing world scientists and health-protection officials.

EHTF seeks to provide a vibrant online meeting place for scientists and health protection professionals from the developed and developing world to exchange opinions and news and to stimulate debate. And through its open-access *Emerging Health Threats Journal*, **EHTF** seeks to maximize the opportunities for developing-world scientists to publish their papers in a scientific journal of the highest standing.

FUNDING

As a not-for-profit association that seeks to make its information resources freely available on as wide a scale as possible, **EHTF**'s business model is dependent upon securing support from charitable foundations and from the international business community. **Emerging Health Threats Forum** is currently supported by the Wellcome Trust, Zurich, Barclays Bank, and JC Bamford Ltd.

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