

## “Global Healthcare: How Good Can We Be?”

By

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Dr. Shah noted that modern public health was founded and has made amazing strides in the last 100 years, but continued progress globally is not assured – it may slow, or in some cases even reverse. Key takeaways are that continued success:

- Requires science, plus data, plus political will; and that
- American leadership is paramount.

Two examples of how with investment and determination, crises can become opportunities:

- Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti vaccinations led to a situation 5 years later in which childhood mortality rates have been cut in half.
- In the famine-relief Dadaab camp on the Kenyan-Somali border *medically targeted foods* have been administered to more closely give malnourished children what they need to survive.

There are currently 60 million displaced persons around the world. Due to climate change, poverty, and desertification, more crises are coming.

- And like Haiti and East Africa, these crises will largely occur in challenging and inaccessible areas where infrastructure and governance have collapsed.

Despite challenges, many millions of lives have been saved in recent decades from such diseases as polio, HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria by improved access to medicines. But this is more than a moral imperative. Dr. Shah pointed out that as children live past age 5, parents invest in education, youth are trained, and economic development is facilitated.

- This helps to stave off strife and conflict, and the United States’ security environment is improved.

Dr. Shah said that a risk to improved health outcomes are *accelerated pandemic threats*. Some threats such as Ebola in West Africa have been met resolutely. Others such a Zika originating in Brazil have not.

Dr. Shah is optimistic about ongoing progress, despite risks such as pandemic. He believes that we are on the cusp of a technological revolution involving data science and analytics. Better prediction will take interventions to the persons who need it most, even if overall resources are limited. Three specific breakthrough areas are:

- Understanding the importance of the human gut microbiome;
- Understanding the link of mental health to morbidity; and
- Vast increases in longevity.

It will take political will and leadership to get the most out of these breakthroughs. Unfortunately, some tragedies such as cholera in Yemen and malaria in Venezuela are of human making.

**Paul F. Herman, Jr.**