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Commentary

Redefining global health and shifting the balance: the ARC-H principle

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Sacrificing globalism on the altar of decolonisation

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Sacrificing globalism on the altar of decolonisation

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Recently, in *BMJ Global Health*, Nasir Jafar and colleagues made another attempt to redefine 'global health'. They aim for 'greater clarity and precision' in a pragmatic and more inclusive sense, with the noble objective to 'to offload colonial vestiges present within the field and terminology of 'global health'. While this goal is undoubtedly right, important and overdue, the argument is alarmingly unconvincing and narrow. In their attempt to redefine, or rather reinterpret, global health, the authors make two important restrictions. Their proposal is based on an understanding of global health that is limited not only to a single country, but also to the field of humanitarian aid. Health emergencies and relief are only part of global health, so reducing the latter to humanitarian aid is absolutely unacceptable. It blatantly neglects both the meaning of "global" as "universal" and the complexity of global health as an explicitly political concept.

The second, unacceptable limitation is the authors' narrowing of global health to healthcare and healthcare systems. It may be that a clinical-biomedical understanding dominates the theory and practice of global health, but the call for an a posteriori recognition of pragmatic development should not distract from the fact that global health is much more complex, encompassing the social, environmental, political and commercial determination of health, as well as inequalities and power

imbalances between and within countries. Against this backdrop, the attempt by Nasir Jafar et al. to redefine global health proves to be inadequate and misleading. Due to the fundamental reductionism reflected in their commentary, the approach is unlikely to make a relevant contribution to decolonising global health, as it diverts the attention from the far more relevant upstream determinants of global health and health inequalities.

Conflict of Interest:

None declared.