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 Institute for Alternative Futures

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IAF Explores Health Disparities

[IAF Explores Health Disparities](#)

The U.S. continues to score poorly on global measures of health because underserved communities disproportionately suffer unhealthy community conditions, a fragmented medical system and a lack of access to care. Representatives of 40 organizations dedicated to reducing these disparities met April 11 in Alexandria, VA to share strategies for bringing health gains to underserved communities.

[Creating Global Citizens for a Challenging and Interconnected World](#)

"The United States, despite spending the most per capita on health care of any nation, is ranked only 28th in infant mortality behind nations such as Malaysia and Cuba," observed Gail Christopher, director of the Joint Center's Health Policy Institute. This poor ranking is due in large part to avoidable disparities among underserved communities, particularly African American communities. The Health Policy Institute's central mission is to ignite a "Fair Health" movement that gives persons of color the inalienable right to an equal opportunity for healthy lives.

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"If everyone has the inalienable right to happiness - then everyone should have the right to healthy lives," Christopher noted at the DRA Partners Meeting. "Without understanding those in our communities that suffer from the undue burdens of disparities, we cannot change. When we connect with the shared humanity of those who suffer, it is clear there is urgency right here and right now to make changes. And that is our commitment."

Upcoming Events:

Consumer Access to Advances in Biomonitoring and Health Coaching, IAF Founder and Chairman of the Board Clem Bezold will present at the conference on Consumers Direct Access to Health and Retailization on May 1 in Las Vegas.

"If the date was 1960 and you were having a planning meeting for the civil rights movement, what would it look like?" asked Larry Cohen of the [Prevention Institute](#). In an attempt to answer this question, Cohen laid out key elements to create a social movement to address health disparities in the [Laying the Groundwork for a Movement to Reduce Health Disparities](#) report. This movement would need to create a strategy or roadmap, generate political will, refine a conceptual approach for addressing health disparities, engage stakeholders with defined roles, identify topical issue areas they should address, develop leadership and provide coordination.

Wiser Futures: Using Futures Tools to Understand and Create the Future, IAF Founder and Chairman of the Board Clem Bezold along with Futurists Craig Bettles and Devin Fidler will conduct this workshop at the [2007 World Futures Society Annual Conference](#) on July 29th in Minneapolis, MN.

One of the most intractable problems is helping poor and minority patients overcome barriers in the medical system such as language barriers, lack of transportation, no financial support, incomplete paperwork and uncoordinated care. Many DRA Project Partners are using patient navigation programs to overcome these barriers. Angelina Esparza from the American Cancer Society and Jonathan Tobin from the Clinical Directors Network discussed their patient navigation programs. Elizabeth Clark of the National Association of Social Workers discussed the patient navigation toolkit her organization created in collaboration with C-Change. The toolkit helps to explain and market the concept of patient navigation and will be available in October 2007.

The Joint Center is partnering with the [California Newsreel](#) to create a grassroots campaign to address health disparities in communities of color. The campaign will culminate in a documentary series, *Unnatural Causes*, which will be shown on PBS. You can sign-up to participate and find out more about the documentary series and the public interest campaign [here](#).

Also, presented at the meeting were new tools for aggregating health information from local, regional and national databases and displaying them on interactive digital maps. The tools were developed by the Rural Policy Research Institute's [Community Information Resource Center](#) and can be found on their website.

The Future of the Meetings Industry: Impact and Actions, , Marsha Rhea and Joan Eisenstodt in a plenary session for HSMAI's Affordable Meetings Conference June 19, 2:45 p.m. at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, San Jose, CA.

IAF invites you to contribute to reducing health disparities by joining the DRA Project. You can find out more about the project and its list of sponsors and partners at [www.altfutures.com/DRA](#). The website also has in-depth summaries of DRA Partners Meetings, Reports on Health Disparities and information on the exciting work underway by our partner network. Please contact Craig Bettles at cbettles@altfutures.com if you have any questions.

Creating Global Citizens for a Challenging and Interconnected World

At a time when U.S. business leaders blast American schools for failing to educate students to compete in a global economy, elementary school leaders want to shift the public goal of schools to a higher aspiration. Elementary school leaders want to educate students to be global citizens.

Imaging's Surprising Success, the 2006 Caldwell Lecture by IAF President Jonathan Peck is available [here](#) as a webcast on the American Roentgen Ray Society website.

In a recent series of dialogues on strategic issues facing schools and principals, leaders of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) said schools should expand their responsibility to developing citizens. This responsibility is a key theme of NAESP's [Vision 2021](#) initiative.

"Schools have a responsibility to their children and to society to create citizens that can learn and work together in a global community on common issues such as the environment, peace and economic development," observes IAF Senior Futurist Marsha Rhea, who is currently assisting NAESP with their [Vision 2021](#) initiative. "Education needs to focus on teaching students the ability to collaborate in global stewardship."

Thomas Friedman, whose bestseller *The World Is Flat* helped Americans understand globalization, just might agree with the foresight of these principals. In a recent New York Times Magazine cover story, Friedman called for an ethic of stewardship, saying, "living, working, designing, manufacturing and projecting America in a green way can be the basis of a new unifying political movement for the 21st century."

In the near future, technology will enable deep connections around the globe and new opportunities for digital education. Today communication technologies make it possible for a third grade class in Michigan to join with a class in China to learn each other's language. Tomorrow they could just as easily be learning together how to address climate change and job creation. Digital learning technologies will help streamline the costs of education and create access to educational opportunities in communities that are too isolated or poor to afford specialized courses.

One NAESP Vision 2021 Advisory Group member observed that the environment is the "sleeping issue" for schools in a globalized world and rising energy costs may lead to a return to smaller, neighborhood schools. New technologies could make the learning experience in small schools richer by creating deep connections with other

schools around the globe and providing specialized courses through digital learning.

Preparing students to be global citizens will be a big mission for the schools. NAESP will consider its role in this mission as it prepares to create a vision and strategic framework to guide the association to the year 2021. NAESP is already helping principals gain experience in making these global connections through its collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). The U.A.E. has partnered with NAESP to assist in a major educational reform effort.

IAF Uses Simulations to Explore the Future

IAF and its for-profit subsidiary AFA are using simulations to shape strategies that can be quickly launched into the real world of business and governance in ways more traditional planning processes cannot. These simulations, which combine forecasts and scenarios with pragmatic decision making, are reducing times to move from strategy to action.

A recent war game conducted by AFA was designed to compress the time in moving from simulation to incubation and then implementation. The business simulation brought together executives from a client company and four potential partners for two days. The simulation covered changes in the business environment from the year 2007 to 2012.

The first day represented 2007 and the second day further compressed the time from 2008 through 2012 into eight hours. Teams of scientists and business development executives negotiated mock deals that typically would have taken a year to work out as real deals. While these teams were meeting over simulated deals, key stakeholders representing different market interests (buyers, regulators, public interests, etc.) created a scenario that these deals would face over the next five years.

The second day of the simulation "stress tested" the deals with a scenario that unfolded over the course of the day. The morning represented 2008 to 2010 and the afternoon was 2010 through 2012. In the second day business executives learned about the ethical, political and economic changes that stakeholders forecast.

At the end of the first day, a strategy had emerged from the negotiations. At the end of the second day, the participants experienced the simulated results this strategy could deliver. Critical stakeholders observing the negotiations affirmed that the strategy met their interests. As a result, the companies that participated left confident they had a winning strategy, and they now report they will move faster to cement real deals.

IAF has also conducted war games to help public policy makers prepare for a global pandemic. IAF's Senior Futurist Bill Rowley developed a flu pandemic scenario that forecast 50 million deaths worldwide. The scenario revealed both the inadequacy of existing government plans and ways in which the private and public sectors could improve responses. The scenario was as part of a simulation for key policy makers in the UK and led to agreements that industry and government work more closely together to prepare for a possible pandemic.

"A few lessons for effective simulations have emerged from IAF's experience," says IAF President Jonathan Peck. "First, make sure that there is a truly strategic question with potential answers that have sufficient value to justify the expense of a simulation. Tactical simulations are not always worth the effort, but for a strategy that will define success in the future, there is no doubt about the value of a good simulation."

Simulations often give management more realistic strategies than most consultant reports as well as the confidence that the strategies are tested by a variety of interested parties. Simulations are also an opportunity to bring abstract futures concepts to life by having participants work pragmatically at solving real challenges. In simulated environments people represent real interests that shape outcomes. The ideas created during a simulation have to do more than just look good on paper; they have to influence others in real time.

A strategy developed during a simulation has to make sense to a wider array of perspectives than often gets processed by corporate teams. The simulation process provides an opportunity to test strategies for unrecognized biases or blind spots. Since the cost of failure in a simulation is relatively low, it provides an opportunity for executives to test a range of potential strategies and empower new opportunities in a short period of time.

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