



Article Title

International Tourism and its Global Public Health Consequences [Summary]

Citation

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Abstract

Tourism, the world's largest industry, is expected to grow to 1.6 billion arrivals by 2020. Public health officials are only beginning to understand the challenges such growth will entail. This article argues that there is a unique and growing public health crisis associated with global tourism. The threat is not only to the tourists but also host societies and the tourists' home nations. Demographics, deforestation, deregulation, decentralization, privatization, and the fragmentation of power pose a dreadful urgency to dealing with this issue. Studies of warning and advisory mechanisms, authority and political will of international bodies, and the overall importance of tourism to most nations illustrate that regulation and coordination are eroding as the need for international collaboration grows. The study concludes with an action agenda for attempting to deal with this crisis.

Summary:

National, regional, and local tourism bodies need to encourage research by task forces and individuals that will develop more coordinated contingency programs and bolster public health readiness.

The travel industry is not a monolithic sector, nor are the nations involved uniformly eager to add more regulatory authority to international bodies or even local public health powers. But it has done so before, particularly in combating smallpox and polio. Today, the health and safety challenges of globalization in general and international tourism in particular pose far greater demands for a level of coordination, political will, surveillance, and planning than ever before.

Inaction, denial, and complacency will only make the policy choices later less palatable and more costly in human and economic terms.

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