

# CHIA

Chronicles of Health  
Impact Assessment

Improving community health through health impact assessments

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## LETTER FROM THE SOCIETY OF PRACTITIONERS OF HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the fall edition of the Chronicles of Health Impact Assessment.

Whilst the papers in this issue weren't written with the pandemic we are globally facing in mind, maybe the themes they present is even more paramount in this current climate: using data-driven approaches to understanding public health issues; engagement with community stakeholder network; learning how to implement a new (to the user) framework or lens with which to view emergent issues; and of course, leveraging new partnerships in the face of limited resources to realize demonstrable improvement in health outcomes.

For many, life in this modern pandemic has cast a spotlight on this thought: How do we find a balance of the opportunities, challenges, and lasting impacts that inevitably come from decisions made on a community scale? Considering this as it relates to HIA, a core opportunity is the collaboration it can bring to the table, involving different stakeholders, both internal and external, developing importantly robust and transparent engagement with the communities that will be affected by a policy or program.

Yet, there is a cost in time, and resources. Skills, time and capacity are prime needs to drive both an individual HIA and the organizational thinking to consider the value of health impacts no matter what type of policy or program. The overall opportunity and cost need to ultimately provide value to the audience – that what was invested was returned at a desirable rate, such that the investment is made again and again. In that we see institutionalization of the lens through which health receives at least equal billing to financial, political, and other decision-making frames.

The papers in this edition highlight great examples of how HIA can be used and linking the wider Social Determinants of Health to having a unified approach across organizations which will in the end impact, preferably positively, on their people and communities. Using HIA is also a good step to developing a culture of Health in All Policies – an element maybe never envisaged when HIA was started to be used, all those decades ago.



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The papers also emphasize, the importance of the effect of inequality to those vulnerable communities and the impacts of inequity, whether that is because of transport, access to food or education or green space and housing. They also underline the importance of working with public health as new and innovative practices evolve.

As we have all faced unprecedented challenges and change in recent months, these papers maybe offer current practices within the world of HIA and public health that shouldn't be ignored – HIA can help bridge new ways of thinking and working together to support those who are most vulnerable. The Chronicles of Health Impact Assessment continues to provide examples of classic themes with real-world application; a launchpad for budding practitioners as they continue to digest the evolving science. We hope the ideas here draw forth fresh energy and excitement as you continue to advance health equity in your own work.

Please continue to stay safe.

Audrey Bonner and Sophie Grinnell  
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