
Genetics and global health: towards a historical framework

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Abstract

Historians tell us that genetics and medicine were intertwined from the very beginning but how has genetics become a global public health issue at a moment in time when basic health needs are not met for a majority of people around the world? Has there been an expansion of genetic techniques and infrastructures from the North to the South or were other dynamics and interests involved? What were the aims, tools and practices and who were the players? Were there models of successful practice? Focusing on the post- World War II era, the talk will suggest that concerns about global atomic fallout, global population screening efforts, WHO policies and national genomic programs in various developing countries as well as indigenous rights and ethical concerns, all played a role in driving investments and establishing genetics and genomics as a global public health issue. At the same time, the review will suggest that our knowledge about these developments is still very patchy.

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