

Iraqi Journal of Public Health

WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH STANDS FOR?

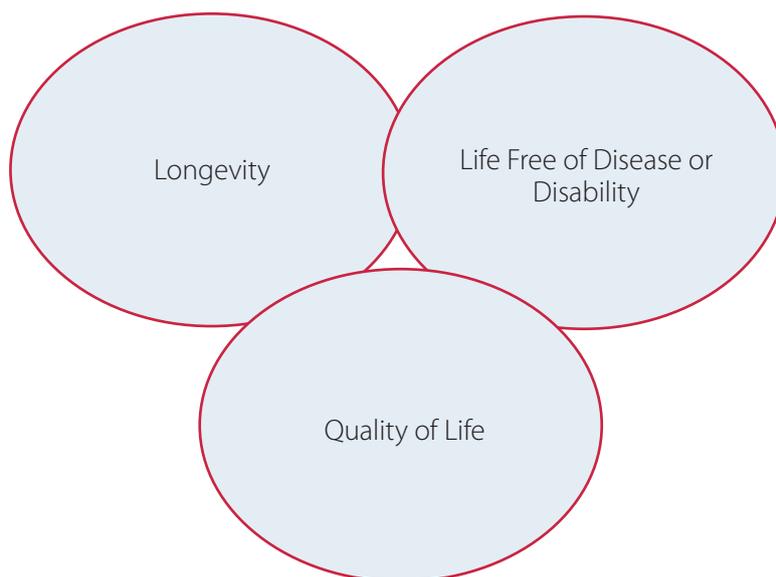
Science is not limited to generating evidence and new discoveries to enhance human wellbeing and prosperity. It is a political instrument. Scientists do not generate enough evidence. Health leaders and politicians underestimate its value. People are not fully benefiting from it. I welcome the new journal, *Iraqi Journal of Public Health*. Now more than ever Iraq needs to focus on public health. After so many years of wars, punitive sanctions by the UN, sectarian conflicts, extremisms and poor governance Iraq needs peace and security. It needs economic development and prosperity. Public health is about peace, security, development and health and not merely focusing on diseases. We hope that the small contribution of this new journal in peace, security, development and health will have some impact of the life and living of the people of Iraq, the Arab world and beyond.

Public health is the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society.¹ Our aim in public health is to live life free of disease and disability, quality living, and for longevity (Fig. 1). Addressing security and the economic growth is not an indulgence but fundamental. The living conditions of the clear majority of Iraqi people have deteriorated since the first Gulf War². Since 1980, the Iraqis are paying a heavy toll for the mistakes of their leaders. Too many lives were wasted, social cohesiveness disintegrated, social justice disappeared and human rights do not exist.⁴

It is the time now to do something different through public health science and art. *First*, build a vision of healthy Iraq. *Second*, believe in it. Every Iraqi should have the right to live full quality life free of disease; live in peace and secure environment; access to education and quality health service without any financial fear and consequences; access to job and wealth generation and freedom of expression and human rights. *Third*, build the institutions to protect peoples' rights, freedom and living. *Fourth*, Generate evidence through science. This new Journal will be a great platform to generate evidence on public health in Iraq. Look at how people are living. What are the disease burdens? What are the key factors that influence their health? Listen to them. Generate evidence on how the social capital influences their health (education, housing and health service). Examine how the current health system performs. Identify the gaps and propose changes based on evidence. Assess the impact of political decision on people's health, education and income. Examine the role of negative cultural and religious belief of people's health. Change it. Look at the experience of advanced countries on how the build strong public health to protect people health and wellbeing. Connect with the people and share the evidence. *Fifth*, listen to, promote and celebrate success.

The Iraqi people deserve better life and health. The curdle of civilization is under threat. In public health, we can do more. Public health is about courage. Not looking at one patient but the entire population. We must stick our neck out and say what is needed to be done and how to do it. Our focus should be on peace, security, development and health. As the Chinese say: "It is better to live one day as a Lion, than 1000 years as a Sheep".

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**The aim of Public Health,
Medicine and Health System
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