

Preface



The *Health Transition Review* has come to the end of the first phase of what will hopefully be a long and valuable life. From volume 8 the editorial office will move to the Harvard School of Public Health and Allan Hill will be editor. This is in keeping with our original plans to rotate the office and editorship between various institutions. There were never plans for rapid rotation and we found the seven years over which the journal was edited from the Health Transition Centre of the Australian National University to be the kind of period necessary for us to be comfortable with the journal and to put our imprint on it.

The journal's general origins lay in a belief that cultural, social and behavioural factors had played a greater role in the epidemiologic and mortality transitions than had been realized, and that a better understanding of that role might allow the Third World health revolution to be speeded up. In the belief that no existing phrase expressed both those influences on health and also the continuing victory over global, and especially Third World, mortality, a new term *health transition* was invented and it is now widely recognized in other journals and glossaries.

Its specific origins lay in research carried out by the ANU's Department of Demography during the 1970s and 1980s on the impact on child mortality of mother's education and autonomy, and in a broader thrust developed by the Rockefeller Foundation which led to the 1985 conference on Good Health at Low Cost held at Bellagio. Key figures who supported the development of the health transition program and journal were, at the Rockefeller Foundation, Ken Prewitt, Ken Warren, Scott Halstead, Sally Findley and Steven Sinding and, at the Ford Foundation, José Barzelatto. From the beginning Allan Hill played a central role, first at London University's Centre for Population Studies and then at Harvard, and Lincoln Chen also did so at Harvard.

The *Health Transition Review* appeared first in April 1991 but that date marked the end of a crucial preparatory period spent developing the field, making the advent of the journal known, and building up a bank of outstanding contributions. To support this activity the ANU Council established the university-wide Health Transition Centre, colocated first with the University's Department of Demography and subsequently with its National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.

During this preliminary period and for most of the subsequent history of the journal a central and very capable and creative role was played by my co-editor, Gigi Santow. She had previously shown equal ability in establishing the *Journal of the Australian Population Association*. Her influence is strongly reflected in this journal. Her skilful and devoted successor was Shail Jain who has also made a massive input into the *Review*. So have the production staff: Wendy Cosford who has been the copy editor for the history of the journal, the production officers who were successively Jennifer Braid, Jo Healy-North and Jeff Marck, and also the electronic publishing co-ordinators Sandi Goddard and Vera Joveska. Pat Goodall, as Centre Secretary, has also contributed, as has Pat Caldwell who participated in the original establishment of the program. We also have a group of Associate Editors and an Editorial Advisory Board, who have between them done much to create the health transition field.

The *Review* has made a number of contributions in the niche it has defined as its own. The articles are original and important and their frequent citation elsewhere demonstrates their

contribution to the growth of the field. The forums have created interest and controversy, as well as inspiring further research. The eight Supplements, funded separately and in total almost as voluminous as the regular issues, have addressed special subfields. There have also been companion volumes produced by the Health Transition Centre: the two-volume *What We Know about Health Transition: The Cultural, Social and Behavioural Determinants of Health* which emerged from the first international seminar of the new program; the volume Allan Hill and John Cleland edited from the second seminar; the *Selected Readings in the Cultural, Social and Behavioural Determinants of Health* which in 1989 helped decide the directions the journal would take; and *Sexual Networking and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa: Behavioural Research and the Social Context*. The last two works met an unanticipated demand and each ran into several editions.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the *Review*, and an element central to the plans for establishing the health transition program, has been the correspondence and other communications it has provoked about research and interventions. This was the reassuring proof we needed that the journal was beginning to change the world.

It is with sadness, and also some relief that we will now have more time for other endeavours, that we pass the journal on to Allan Hill and Harvard. The journal will henceforth inevitably develop new characteristics, and that is all to the good.

Jack Caldwell