Do doctors cause wars?

Note: These are the personal views of Jack Parsons, not those of Population Matters.

Do medicine and health care increase population size as well as individual quality of life? Do large and rapid increases in numbers tend to put greater pressure on — and therefore increase competition for — scarce resources, in turn raising the level and intensity of human conflict and violence? Does this hypothesised succession of events present health professionals with weighty ethical and practical dilemmas requiring urgent attention? It is argued here that it does.

Every human society is faced not with one population problem but with two: how to beget and rear enough children, and how not to beget and rear too many. (Margaret Mead, 1950, p. 210)

One of the reasons for [the present] situation is the success of medicine ... By greatly reducing the number of infant deaths in all countries a natural check upon the rapid growth of population has been removed ... [and] more people than ever before are surviving into their seventh and eighth decade. (Dr. Noël Poynter, President, British Society for the History of Medicine, 1971, p. 4)

As human beings we [doctors] care about the future of mankind and the planet we live on. Brochure of the Doctors and Overpopulation group, 1987. President, Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, KBE, MD; Chairman, Dr John Loraine, DSc, MB; Secretary, Dr John Guillebaud, MA, MB)

More about this publication.