

Of markets and rights: Discourse in the 2008 and 2013 Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases

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Background: The 2013 Global Action Plan for the Prevention (GAP) and Control of Noncommunicable Disease (NCDs) is one of the key documents to emerge since the UN High Level Meeting on the NCDs. This study is an analysis of the 2008 and 2013 GAP-NCDs to determine if and in what ways recommendations to address NCDs are implicitly or explicitly adopting a market-oriented approach.

Methods: Using Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality, this study utilizes Fairclough's critical discourse analysis methodology to analyze the construction of WHO's discourse in the GAP. The choice of material includes the 2008 and 2013 GAP as politically acceptable technical recommendations. Textual analysis focuses on how texts are produced and consumed, and how they situated vis-à-vis other discourse and the broader social relations and structures.

Findings: Foucault's analysis of neoliberal discourse suggests that it strives to impart market principles onto non-economic domains of society, creating individualized social policy instead of "collectivization and socialization by and in social policy." The evolution of the GAP from 2008 to 2013 shows a discursive commitment to a view of health as a form of human capital necessary for economic development and prosperity. There is a heightened emphasis on collectivization in recommendations regarding tobacco control which balances the provision of negative rights and positive rights. For diet and physical activity, however, there is a shift toward provision of positive rights and a weakening of negative rights, reinforcing the notion of individual choice as the primary determinant of health. This discursive framing protects from state intervention commercial activities which harm human health and reinforces neoliberal characterization of the government as regulator of society in service of the market.

Interpretation: The 2013 GAP has opted to operate through market mechanisms to incentivize healthier diet and activity choices, demonstrating a clear turn to what Foucault describes as an extension of market principles to non-economic spheres of society.

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Clinical and surgical implications of EGFR mutations in non-small cell lung cancer

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Background: The epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) is a receptor tyrosine kinase that is significant in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Exon 19 and 21 EGFR mutations are associated with a high response to targeted therapy, and exon 20 mutations are associated with a poor response. Little is known about the incidence of EGFR mutations in Taiwan, but lung cancer continues to be the most common cause of cancer death in Taiwan. This study was designed to test the hypotheses that specific EGFR exon mutations would be prevalent in NSCLC patients at Taipei Hospital in Taiwan, and that there would be a correlation between specific exon mutations and lung tumor locations.

Methods: This retrospective cohort study utilized data from the Taiwan International Healthcare Training Center (TIHTC) of Taipei Hospital. NSCLC cases were selected from all lung cancer cases at TIHTC. Participants must have been screened for EGFR mutations, received targeted therapy (erlotinib/gefitinib) from Taipei Hospital, and received chest X-rays and CT scans before and after starting treatment. The frequencies of EGFR mutations in NSCLC patients from TIHTC were compared with frequencies from previous studies in Asia. Radiological imaging was reviewed to determine tumor location.

Findings: The study population included 4 categories: no EGFR mutation, exon 19 in frame deletion, exon 20 in frame insertion, and exon 21 L858R mutation. The frequencies of these mutations were 36.4%, 9.1%, and 18.2% for exon 19, 20, and 21 mutations respectively, as compared to existing findings of 48%, 9.2%, and 43%. Interestingly, in examining the relationship between EGFR mutations and tumor location, exon 19 was associated with right-sided tumors, and exon 21 with left-sided tumors; 75% of exon 19 mutations were associated with tumors in the right lung.

Interpretation: This study provided an informative perspective on Taiwan's EGFR mutation frequencies, as analysis of data from Taiwan specifically has not been previously conducted. The incidence rates in Taiwan corroborate data found in existing literature. There is insufficient evidence about tumor site location and its impact on treatment outcomes. Future studies should continue exploring whether tumor location has a direct impact on outcomes for surgical treatment of NSCLC tumors, similar to the impact of mutation associations with targeted therapy, in order to determine improved clinical and surgical outcomes for NSCLC patients.

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