Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you regarding our intention to engage disease, injury, and risk factor experts in a new iteration of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study. This major international undertaking will commence very soon—in the fall of 2007—and the Core Team of researchers is now contacting various experts who may wish to be involved in the new study to explain its purpose in greater detail and to describe the benefits of participation.

As you may know, the original Global Burden of Disease Study, based around 1990, had several explicit aims for improving the collection, analysis, and use of epidemiological information. With the collaboration of scientific experts from around the world, GBD researchers produced what has been described as the first comprehensive, credible, and reliable measures of population health encompassing both fatal and non-fatal outcomes. The study has been widely used to guide national and global debates and policies and programs for health development.

Clearly, the original GBD research program was a vital first step in expanding our knowledge about disease and health, life and death worldwide. The new Global Burden of Disease Study, however, will further extend the impact of burden work. By incorporating new data and refined research methodologies, the upcoming GBD Study will yield the most authoritative population health estimates ever made available to the public. Additionally, streamlined analytical tools and dissemination strategies will enable policymakers to make decisions based on health information that is both thorough and sound; this will produce salutary effects for the global community, especially those persons living with disproportionate disease burdens or those regions suffering from elevated mortality rates in the developing world. Thus, the new Global Burden of Disease Study will result in the best empirical understanding of health conditions worldwide, and this will position the greater research community and governments to further improve population health.

A Core Management Team will direct the Study, comprising of senior health experts at the recently founded Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Queensland, and the World Health Organization. Moreover, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has generously underwritten the project, which will be conducted over the course of the next thirty-six months. The principle outputs of the Study will be a new set of burden estimates, comprehensive analyses, and tools for research and teaching which will be released to the international community through a series of publications.

Most importantly, the Global Burden of Disease Study can only be completed by securing intellectual contributions from the foremost experts in global health. In specific, the Core Team will be enlisting a cadre of experts to facilitate the disease and injury epidemiological reviews. Experts will be organized into approximately 40 expert groups. These expert groups will be placed in one of five clusters, which will be managed by a cluster leader from the Core Team. This management structure is meant to ensure close collaboration between experts and to seamlessly integrate their research efforts into the project as a whole; thus, experts will be able to make strategic and efficient contributions to the project with guidance from the Core Team.

The research undertaken by experts will prove pivotal to the project. Expert groups will be working with the Core Team to conduct a systematic review of all available data sources and studies to estimate incidence, prevalence, case-fatality, and mortality from each disease, injury, and risk factor to be studied in the new Global Burden inquiry, based on appropriate definitions of disease and injury sequelae and risk factor exposure. In effect, the Study relies on the expertise and selfless commitment of such groups to perform much of the work in deriving new burden estimates. In exchange, the Study offers an array of high-profile publication opportunities; access to an extended network of colleagues engaged in similar research; modest funding to support completion of project work; and the promise of genuinely important academic research, which will be used to generate new health knowledge that will undoubtedly influence global health debates for years to come.

Last month, the Core Team issued an open call for expert participation in *The Lancet.* We will be continuing to reach out to experts through announcements in other venues as well as through our networks of burden investigators. The project is meant to be inclusive of experts who may or may not have worked on burden before but have experience in systematic reviews, expertise in a specific disease or injury, and/or a background in epidemiology or statistical methods. The Study also will seek to accommodate researchers who would like to contribute but lack requisite time to devote to the project for the duration of the Study.

We ask all potential experts who wish to be involved in the Global Burden of Disease Study to apply through the website, which can be found at www.globalburden.org. If you might be interested in participating, we request that you visit the website, fill out a brief questionnaire, and submit your curriculum vitae for consideration. Members of the Core Team will review each application and, after consultation with leaders of Expert Groups, determine which prospective experts will be invited to participate. It is our desire to be as inclusive as possible in engaging qualified disease and injury experts from around the world. Finally, as an administrative matter, we strongly recommend that all potential experts complete the form by August 31st to be considered as possible participants in the 2007 Global Burden of Disease Study.

We do hope that you will consider joining us in this historic endeavor. Please take a few minutes to visit the project web site, learn more about the Study, and submit your curriculum vitae. Prospective GBD experts wishing to make specific inquiries about the process may direct them to info@globalburden.org.

Thank you in advance for considering this call for collaboration. We look forward to the possibility of collaborating with you on this seminal project over the next few years.

Kind Regards,

Christopher J. L. Murray
Director, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
Professor, Department of Global Health, University of Washington

Robert Black
Chairman, Department of International Health
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Ties Boerma
Director, Department of Measurement and Health Information Systems
World Health Organization

Majid Ezzati
Associate Professor of International Health
Harvard School of Public Health
Harvard Initiative for Global Health

Kenneth Hill
Associate Director, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies

Dean Jamison
Angelopolous Visiting Prof. in Public Health and International Development
Harvard School of Public Health and Kennedy School of Government
Harvard Initiative for Global Health

Alan Lopez
Head of School
School of Population Health, University of Queensland

Colin Mathers
Coordinator, Country Health Information
Information, Evidence and Research Cluster
World Health Organization

Catherine Michaud
Senior Research Scientist
Harvard School of Public Health
Harvard Initiative for Global Health

Joshua Salomon
Associate Professor of International Health
Harvard School of Public Health
Harvard Initiative for Global Health

Kenji Shibuya
Coordinator, Health Statistics and Evidence
Information, Evidence and Research Cluster
World Health Organization

Theo Vos
Director, Centre for Burden of Disease and Cost-Effectiveness
School of Population Health, University of Queensland

Neff Walker
Senior Research Scientist, Department of International Health
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health