

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## **The World Health Report 2002 – Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life<sup>1</sup>**

**Sir:**

Since the journal over the years has been very interested in the development of **Human Resources**, I share with you my annual search for **HR**.

The 167 pages report (with a 63 page Statistical Annex) is presented by the past Director-General as “one of the largest research projects WHO has ever undertaken”. And indeed, the report provides clearly presented ample evidence that “reducing risks (...) has never been more relevant than today”. In politically correct terms it adds that “in many ways the world is a safer place today” “but in many other ways the world is becoming more dangerous”. You choose!

The findings highlight the leading risk factors: underweight for the poor, obesity for the affluent, unsafe sex for all, unsafe water and sanitation, high cholesterol and blood pressure, alcohol and tobacco consumption, indoor smoke from solid fuels and iron deficiency.

“Human Resources development”, “workforce”, “education” or even “training” are not listed in the table of contents.<sup>2</sup>

In “Unsafe health care practices” we are informed that “medical errors cause several tens of thousands of deaths annually”. I searched further, convinced that “Recommended actions” would include one about improving the competence of health workers in order to diminish this risk of avoidable deaths. I found under ‘Preventing risks and taking action’ that “Risk understanding may need to be strengthened among (...) public health practitioners”.

I feel so reassured that WHO is really acting that I have decided to stop my annual search for **HR** in WHO ‘products’.

J-J Guilbert, M.D., Ph.D. (educ)  
POLIGER/Hopitaux Universitaires, 35 rue des Bains,  
CH-1205, Geneva, Switzerland, E-mail: guilbert.j-j@hcuge.ch

### **Notes**

1. ISBN 92 4 156207 2-Price: Sw.fr. 15./Developing countries Sw.fr. 10.50.
2. It has also disappeared from the table of contents of the WHO ‘Information Products Catalogue, 2002. It was still called Publications Catalogue’ in 2000 and still contained references to Education & Training.