Methodologies for realizing the potential of health impact assessment

Brian L. Cole, Riti Shimkhada, Jonathan E. Fielding, Gerald Kominski, Hal Morgenstern; UCLA School of Public Health

December 15, 2004

Abstract

Health impact assessment (HIA), a systematic assessment of potential health impacts of proposed public polices, programs and projects, offers a means to advance population health by bringing public health research to bear on questions of public policy. The U.S. has been slow to adopt HIA, but considerable strides have been made in many other countries and under the auspices of the World Health Organization and World Bank. Varied applications in these diverse milieu have given rise to divergent approaches to HIA—quantitative/analytic, participatory, and procedural—each with distinct disciplinary foundations, goals and methodologies. Suitability of these approaches for different applications and their challenges are highlighted, along with areas where methodological work is most needed and most likely to advance the field from theory and infrequent application to more routine practice in the U.S.