

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



LSHTM Research Online

Smith, J; (2018) Parasitic and parachute research in global health. *The Lancet Global health*, 6 (8). e838. ISSN 2214-109X DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(18\)30315-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(18)30315-2)

Downloaded from: <http://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/4648598/>

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(18\)30315-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(18)30315-2)

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact researchonline@lshtm.ac.uk.

Available under license: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>

<https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk>



Parasitic and parachute research in global health

Global health advocates often speak the language of eradication. It is reassuring to see the Editors of *The Lancet Global Health* turn their attention to another eradication effort: that of so-called parachute researchers and parasitic research (June issue).¹ The Editors raise the important issue of exploitative research activities, from which individuals from predominantly high-income countries extract data and knowledge from predominantly low-income and middle-income countries without due acknowledgment of local partners and collaborators.

However, what is missing from this strongly worded Editorial is due acknowledgement of the true extent to which parachutists and parasites have shaped, and continue to shape, global health discourse. Such exploitative claims have been levelled against *The Lancet* in the past,² and will probably be made again until such a time that the entirety of the system for global health research and reflection, and its presentation in academic journals, is radically reimagined. Many now-influential academics have established their careers on the basis of exploitative research and publishing for global health, and continue to do so, in a way that has not been suppressed in the semantic transition from international to global health.

If this debate is limited to the pursuit of appropriate authorship criteria, then an opportunity has been lost to more meaningfully explore the ways in which power continues to manifest unequally in knowledge production for global health. For as long as a positivist epistemology continues to shape global health scholarship, it will be perceived that all that is needed of knowledge production in global health is more inclusive authorship criteria. Such an approach assumes the existence of an objective and apolitical knowledge, and thus sees little need

for a diversity of perspectives at all stages in knowledge production for global health—from the prioritisation of research questions, to the financing of particular research initiatives, and the analysis and interpretation of data. The publishing houses that host global health scholarship would do better to interrogate the ways in which truly global perspectives are lost at all stages in this process.

I declare no competing interests.

Copyright © 2018 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an Open Access article under the CC BY 4.0 license.

James Smith
james.smith1@lshtm.ac.uk

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine,
London WC1H 9SH, UK

- 1 The Lancet Global Health. Closing the door on parachutes and parasites. *Lancet Glob Health* 2018; **6**: e593.
- 2 Horton R. Offline. Is global health neo-colonialist? *Lancet* 2013; **382**: 1690.