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To: "Admiral William Fallon - Co-chair, CSIS Commission on Smart Global Health Policy"
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From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

Subject: The US & health strategy: Would a free global television channel help?

Dear Admiral Fallon and Commission Members:

There is good news: the US government has a free global television channel that might be available to build a smart global health strategy. It's called VOA-TV (formerly WorldNet). You can see the global satellite maps/footprints and current broadcast schedule online at <http://ibb7-2.ibb.gov/tvschedule/>

VOA-TV - A Brief Background

About a decade ago we looked into a future for Worldnet/VOA-TV as part of the CSIS Working Group on Public Diplomacy. There was no money, but the Broadcasting Board of Governors has kept the 24x7 global satellite capacity. Most of their programming is just what they can get for free. [Any US programs that will attract an audience - even PBS series like Sesame Street and Ken Burns, etc. - are sold directly abroad to cable and satellite systems.] On weekends and holidays the VOA-TV staff basically throws a switch, goes home, and rebroadcasts C-SPAN (without a program guide) to avoid broadcasting a blank screen but with - as they know - another audience share almost indistinguishable from zero. . . . By now, the world has changed and it is awash in mass market satellite television channels on every continent, including news about America - Discovery Channel, MTV, CNN, old movie channels, infotainment Hollywood & music, etc. America's global public competitor (BBC-TV), which did put money into its operation, took off and now owns global upscale English language news, sports, and business, etc.

A Fresh Idea: Serious Health Programming/Information, Beginning with Women's Health?

Re the attached paper (pp. 2-4 and 16-17): The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation invited me to think about a new framework for useful health programming - beyond the current infotainment and health-beauty-relationships programming for women on mass market US channels. The Kaiser Family Foundation sponsored a second national meeting for the paper ("Consumer-Oriented Broadcasting & Video Archives for Health") as a future PBS upgrade.

A quick glance (i.e., pp. 2-4 and 16-17) will give you an overview. The next step moves beyond a mass market channel. Instead, the strategy identifies, and serves, every single niche market for serious health information. The kind of specific information that people want when they, or someone they care about, is diagnosed with a new illness; or that women want when they become pregnant for the first time and have their first child. [You might want to begin with women's health.] There also can be regular updates about chronic diseases and news/policy programs - e.g., an African Health Update weekly program, like Washington Week in Review. The transponders can be configured to transmit digitally overnight, with Internet files or Index Medicus updates, or curriculum resources for serious health education in K-12 schools, or Global Grand Rounds in tropical medicine for medical schools, etc.

There is a great deal of work ahead. Not everyone can benefit directly from the programs in the poorest countries and rural areas but word gets around about serious health issues - perhaps especially among women - once people identify a trusted source.

Needed: Strategic Plans

The availability of a free global television channel may be a perfect stimulus for creative thinking by a strategy group whose members are at the level of the CSIS Commission on Smart Global Health.

Judith McHale: A Source of Ideas and Support?

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (<http://www.bbg.gov>) might love to hear from you. Secretary Clinton is a member, and I believe she is represented by the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Judith McHale. Under Secretary McHale has an interesting background for a Global Health strategy leveraging US leadership in global communications. As President and CEO of Discovery Communications from 1987

to 2006 she built it into one of the world's most extensive media enterprises - 100 channels to 170 countries, 35 languages. Since 2006 she has worked fulltime on economic growth projects for Africa and other UDCs.

Another possible resource is Kaiser's investment in a broadcast studio in Washington, near Metro Center, which is fully equipped to produce programming for television + Internet.

with all good wishes for your work,
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