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Public Health

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Letter to the Editor

The index of 'well-being': a clue for public health?



La Placa and Knight¹ rightly pointed out that 'well-being' is not taken enough into account in public health; however, their paper deserves comment.

Firstly, a reliable index for well-being is already available.² In 2008, Gallup and Healthways initiated a partnership to understand the key factors that drive well-being. The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index provides an in-depth view of well-being for each USA States and Congressional Districts. The index score is an average of six sub-indexes, which examine life evaluation, emotional health, work environment, physical health, healthy behaviours, and access to basic necessities. Since 2013, the measure is also available for almost every major country in the world ($n = 140$). This index may be a simple and useful indicator to evaluate how politicians are dedicated to the building of public health policies for their populations health or predictors of psychological well-being in populations.^{3,4} The Dartmouth Atlas project which began in 1993 has shown that the capricious way that patients receive medical care depends on where they live.⁵ The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index shows similar discrepancies.

Secondly, as citizens seem more responsive to politicians's hypes than to facts, I can hardly accept La Placa and Knight's hopes. Public health professionals have enough indicators and many policies are well evidence based. The concept which must be developed may be agnotology, the study of culturally induced ignorance.

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14 January 2014

Available online 25 July 2014

0033-3506/\$ – see front matter

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2014.04.006>