

I agree with Dr. Meshnick that we need to think carefully about what is in a name. It is important to know and take into account if the meaning of a word differs between our scientific and other scientific or non-scientific communities. And obviously, we need to agree among ourselves what we mean when we use a certain word. If we do not agree, we should start with discussing and defining what "Hygiene" stands for in the name of our society. At the end, we then still can decide if hygiene is the best or whether there is a better word for it.

Dear Sir:

In a recent issue of the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, Meshnick<sup>1</sup> proposed a change in the name of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. The arguments for such a change would indeed appear to be valid and strong. During the 1880s when the term hygiene was used for the first time, no one could have dreamt of all that would have transpired during the subsequent period. Innumerable changes would be best appreciated by the existing speed of intercontinental communications using internet and supersonic airplanes. There has been a transition from "pigeon technology" for communications to instant electronic signaling.

Dr. Meshnick<sup>1</sup> proposes replacement of the word "Hygiene" by "Global Health" with no change in "Tropical Medicine." Such a change would not address the constantly changing environment all over the globe. The global climate change accompanied by emergence of the so called tropical diseases in temperate or even cold climates would justify a change in the term "Tropical Medicine." A simultaneous change in the two distinct components should ensure that the revised no-

Dear Sir:

Our colleague Dr. Meshnick has proposed that our Society change its name.<sup>1</sup> He expresses the view that "Hygiene" may not represent the membership and the work we conduct. He suggests, "The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Global Health." I don't know what "Global Health" means, but I do understand "Hygiene" and argue its relevance to diseases of the tropics and our Society.

Maintaining health in the tropics requires more than medical intervention after disease strikes. It requires more than drugs and vaccines to prevent disease. It requires something else, hygiene. Next year will be the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the work of Dr. William Gorgas in Panama. That 10-year effort was not accomplished with medicine or global health, it was hygiene: spraying insecticides, eliminating breeding sites, creating efficient drainage, build-

## REFERENCE

1. Meshnick SR, 2003. Letter to the editor. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 68: 507.

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menclature would continue to be ever green even at the end of the 22nd century.

We suggest that the name should be changed to the American Society of Global Medicine and Health. Certainly, that would address both conventional and emerging disorders labeled during the past two centuries as tropical diseases. Last but not least, the concept of health would not be drastically altered in subsequent centuries.

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## REFERENCE

1. Meshnick SR, 2003. Letter to the editor. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 68: 507.

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ing homes that keep mosquitoes at bay, and many other measures unrelated to clinical or laboratory medicine. Today many of the tropical infectious agents our Society investigates creep out of the conditions created by ignorance of hygiene.

The neglect of hygiene as a tool of disease prevention is lamentable. A simple hygienic practice that could prevent endemic disease often doesn't happen because no one thought of it. We fly into areas of endemic disease bearing rapid diagnostics and effective therapies, but we neglect to bring the idea for a simple measure of hygiene that could prevent most of the infections being diagnosed and treated. Hygiene has no cache. No one funds research aimed at improving hygiene, and that's too bad. Hygiene comes with no microsatellite arrays, ELISA wells, or dramatic recoveries in the clinic. Sound hygiene quietly creates communities of healthy people.

I propose the Society retain "Hygiene" in its name, and

more actively promote the relationship between sound hygiene and human health in the tropics.

## REFERENCE

1. Meshnick SR, 2003. Letter to the editor. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 68: 507.

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Dear Sir:

I second the proposal of Dr. Meshnick that our Society change its name.<sup>1</sup> The comments he made regarding "Hygiene" were right on target. I believe that the American Society of Tropical Medicine and International Health or alternatively the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Global Health would suit the bill nicely.

## REFERENCE

1. Meshnick SR, 2003. Letter to the editor. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 68: 507.

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