

# American University Washington College of Law

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From the Selected Works of Claudio M. Grossman

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## Foreword, Health Law and Policy Brief

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# Foreword

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Shortly before his untimely death, Jonathan Mann called upon the fields of health and human rights to recognize their “true interdependence and real interconnectedness.”\* This idea — that health and human rights are inextricably linked — was the organizing principle behind the Inaugural Conference on Global Health, Gender, and Human Rights which took place at American University Washington College of Law (WCL) on March 21 – 22, 2012. The Conference, co-organized by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and WCL, highlighted the interconnectedness of health and human rights by bringing together leaders from both fields and across the globe to grapple with some of the most pressing health and human rights challenges: how to ensure access to medicines and health information, how to control tobacco use, how to reduce maternal mortality, and how to protect the health and human rights of populations in situations of vulnerability.

The interconnectedness of health and human rights is also central to the longstanding partnership between PAHO and WCL. In the past, law schools, medical schools, and universities often worked under the assumption that they were the “only ones” doing research, storing the products of their research in libraries, and for training students. But we have witnessed the breaking down of barriers and realignment of roles, and now more educational institutions recognize the importance of building strategic partnerships across institutions that share the common goals of promoting and protecting human rights and global health. It is our hope that the collaboration between PAHO and WCL will prove an important step towards the fulfillment of the right to health and other related human rights as established in the health agenda for the Americas 2008-2017 and PAHO Resolution CD50R8 “Health and Human Rights.” It will also support PAHO Member States,

international agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and universities in their effort to promote health in all policies and develop goals in a manner consistent with universal and regional human rights treaties and standards.

In addition to valuing PAHO and WCL’s close partnership, we are grateful for the generous support of the following organizations and individuals in realizing this Conference and special edition of the *Health Law & Policy Brief*: the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Guatemala, WCL alumnus Joel Michaels, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Anand Grover, as well as the distinguished panelists; Working Group facilitators and participants; Conference organizers/WCL alumni Javier Vásquez, Corrine Parver, and Cristina Leria; and our Conference fellows, many of whom were WCL students who managed to write the outstanding works featured herein despite heavy course loads and the rigors of law school. Their hard work and commitment bodes well for the future of the legal profession and Jonathan Mann’s vision.

That is a good thing, for we still have a lot of work to do. While there have been important developments in health systems reform in a manner consistent with human rights instruments, we are far from where we need to be. We need a concerted effort from governments, civil society, human rights treaty bodies, universities, international agencies, and other actors in order to create societies where human beings can fully enjoy their right to the highest attainable standard of health and other related human rights, and can develop themselves to their full potential. We hope the Conference and this issue of the *Brief* will push us even further in that direction and help move us closer to the full enjoyment of well-being and a world in which all humankind benefits from our interdependence and our interconnectedness.

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\* Jonathan M. Mann, *AIDS and Human Rights: Where Do We Go from Here?* 1 HEALTH HUM RIGHTS 143, 148 (1998).