A Message from the Editor

In a recently published meta-analysis study of 136 research reports, Anderson et al.¹ conclude that the "evidence strongly suggests" that exposure to violent video game (VVG) playing can cause increased aggressive thoughts and behavior, and decreased pro-social and empathetic behavior among young people exposed to VVGs. In an accompanying critique in the same journal, Ferguson and Kilburn² conclude that the Anderson meta-analysis has "numerous flaws" that overestimate the influence of VVGs on aggression. It's clear from these articles that VVG playing and its effect on aggressive behavior continue to be intensely debated in the science and policy communities.

Adding to the public health aspect of this debate, Armstrong and colleagues present findings in this issue of Public Health Reports (PHR) on the association between hours of television (TV) and video game (VG) viewing and substance use among a sample of fourth and fifth graders in Kentucky. (Substance use was defined as alcohol use, illegal drug use, smoking/ tobacco use, or sniffing solvents.) The primary findings of the questionnaire study were that one-third of the respondents indicated some level of substance use, and that children who spend more time viewing TV and VGs have greater odds of reporting alcohol use and solvent sniffing. However, the authors do note that it is unknown whether the problem is the actual hours spent in front of the TV/playing VGs or the content seen. And so, the debate continues.

On the other end of the age spectrum, the *Surgeon General's Perspectives* column for this issue focuses on one of the health challenges people face as they age:

bone health and osteoporosis. In her column, VADM Benjamin reminds us that healthy, strong bones are vital to our overall health and well-being. We also learn that osteoporosis is a largely preventable disease that can lead to an increased risk of fractures, especially with age.

This issue of *PHR* also includes a special supplement on public health laboratories (PHLs). This supplement explores the complex interactions and relationships between systems of PHLs, both public and private. It focuses attention on the importance of PHL systems at the local, state, and national level that support public health research, practice, and policy efforts.

And finally, in this issue we are introducing a name change for our *International Observer* column, which offers global perspectives on public health. The column has been renamed *Global Health Matters* to more accurately reflect the work of public health researchers and practitioners around the world. In this issue, Boldo et al. assess the health impact of environmental tobacco smoke on sudden infant death syndrome cases and asthma episodes among children in Europe.

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REFERENCES

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- Ferguson CJ, Kilburn J. Much ado about nothing: the misestimation and overinterpretation of violent video game effects in eastern and western nations: comment on Anderson et al. (2010). Psychol Bull 2010:136:174-8.