

## CONTROVERSY OVER HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS: Which way for developing countries?

### **Authorship**

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### **Abstract**

The Ghana Public Health Association organized a scientific seminar in April 2014 to examine the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into public use, and their potential health consequences. The seminar was driven by current public debate on the subject. Concerns have been raised about use of GMOs, especially in developing countries, for a variety of reasons including ethical and biosafety considerations. The seminar identified some of their advantages such as introduction of pest resistant, disease resistant, and drought tolerant crops; potential for reduced use of chemicals and pesticides; improving the nutritional properties of crops, and huge potential for production of pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

Potential health concerns raised included current efforts focusing primarily on a few crop/trait combinations of high commercial value; most trial designs are laboratory design and of short duration; increasing observation of trends in organ disease with use of GMOs, and lack of labeling of GMO products that hinder post-marketing surveillance.

There is the need to enhance local capacity to research the introduction and use of GMOs; to put in place appropriate regulatory mechanisms including, particularly, the labeling of their products, and long-term post-marketing surveillance for possible negative health consequences.

Furthermore, the appropriate state agency should put in place advocacy and communication strategies to keep the public informed about the health and other consequences of GMOs, for informed public choices.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Dr Amofah George graduated MB ChB from University of Ghana Medical School (1978) and holds Masters in Public Health (Univ of Leeds); and Fellow of Ghana College of Physicians, and West Africa College of Physicians. He was awarded Fellow through Distinction of Faculty of Public Health, U.K in June 2022.

He was the Deputy Director General of Ghana Health Service until retirement in December 2011, after serving in various capacities at all levels of Ghana's health care delivery system as Primary Health Care coordinator, District Director and Regional Director of Health Services, as well as National Director of Public Health.

Dr Amofah George is the President of Ghana Public Health Association and a part-time lecturer at the Ghana College of Physicians. He is currently a Governing Council member of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, representing the African Region.

He has 27 publications in national and international peer reviewed journals and has three books to his credit.



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