Fortnightly links: voluntourism, WHO and WB, cash transfers, UK aid, and more

By Camilla Burkot and Terence Wood

In *Scientific American*, Noelle Sullivan writes that while students and volunteers volunteering in health and medical roles overseas are usually well-intentioned, they can cause serious harm.

The EconTalk podcast has a great episode featuring Harvard University’s Lant Pritchett on poverty, growth and experiments.

At the World Health Assembly, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was selected as the next director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) — the first African to occupy the role. He takes over on 1 July. In related news, the WHO came under
criticism after financial data revealed that the agency spent about $200m of its $2bn budget on travel in 2015 and 2016.

The news that World Bank chief economist Paul Romer had been relieved of oversight over the Bank’s Development Economics Group, apparently because he sought to make researchers in the group communicate more clearly, made waves this fortnight. You can read different takes on the matter from the Sydney Morning Herald, the Guardian, the Economist, and Bloomberg blogger Noah Smith. In related news, Bank of England staff have apparently been told to study Dr Seuss in efforts to improve the intelligibility of their reports.

Phil Baty plots the relationship between wealth and world-class universities, showing a clear relationship between GDP per capita and the availability of quality higher education.

Chris Blattman, Michael Faye, Dean Karlan, Paul Niehaus & Chris Udry have a great, non-technical article on what we do and don’t know on unconditional cash transfers.

Next week, Britain goes to the polls — The Guardian has a breakdown of the major parties’ key commitments on aid and development issues.

About the author/s

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Camilla Burkot was a Research Officer at the Development Policy Centre, and Editor of the Devpolicy Blog, from 2015 to 2017. She has a background in social anthropology and holds a Master of Public Health from Columbia University, and has field experience in Eastern and Southern Africa, and PNG. She now works for the Burnet Institute.

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