

Geospatial analysis and data accessibility in medical geography: opportunities and challenges

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Globally, the spread of communicable diseases is a major concern, and as such, their eradication is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Although the spread of infectious diseases is socially and economically driven, their spatial dynamics is conducive to the use of geospatial tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, web mapping among others, to inform effective public health decision-making/interventions for current and anticipated impacts, particularly in an environment of changing climate. While these tools are ubiquitous, they sometimes require data that is not always accessible or available at the desired scale, which poses a constraint to the ability of researchers to conduct comprehensive analyses. Despite these challenges, there are innovative opportunities such as stakeholder engagement/consultation and the use of spatial multi-criteria analysis that can offer solutions to overcome data-access issues. This paper highlights the data challenges and opportunities related to the use of geospatial tools to fill critical gaps in medical geography/public health data access and thereby facilitate informed decision making in the public health sector.

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