

Summer Conversation Series with Sam Halabi

***“The Internationalization of Public Health Law and  
the Paradox of Civil Liability”***

**Monday, July 9, 2012 · 12:00 – 1:30 PM**

Georgetown University Law Center  
E. B. Williams Library, **Room 358**  
600 New Jersey Avenue, NW · Washington, DC 20001

**Sam Halabi**

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**Moderated by Susan Kim**

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**Abstract**

Over the past 15 years, there has been a revolution in public health law. Previously considered a fundamentally national domain, sovereign states constructed their own health care systems guided generally by what they regarded as necessary to provide for the populations within their territories. As barriers between peoples and goods have eroded at an unprecedented rate, measures adopted at the national level are now viewed as inadequate as health threats may originate locally but quickly reach globally. States have therefore seen it in their interests to develop coordinating and harmonizing instruments which address these global health threats. For example, the vast majority of sovereign states have ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in order to reduce the disease burden imposed by a small number of global tobacco firms. States have updated and expanded the applicability of the International Health Regulations to coordinate international responses to outbreaks of communicable diseases. Other major international legal efforts lie in the wait like the proposed Framework Convention on Alcohol Control and even more ambitious proposals like Larry Gostin's Framework Convention on Global Health. This Article addresses a barrier to the potential success of these and similar legal instruments. While states have developed some health-specific treaties and “soft law” instruments to coordinate state-level conduct, they have allocated more powerful enforcement powers to private actors which may and sometimes will oppose the public health agenda.

**Biography**

Professor Halabi earned his J.D. from Harvard Law School, where he served as Articles Editor and Senior Editor for the Harvard International Law Journal. After graduating, he served as law clerk to the Honorable Nanette K. Laughrey of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri, and practiced for two years with the Washington, D.C. office of Latham & Watkins. As an attorney, Professor Halabi's practice focused on transnational mergers and acquisitions and the regulation of financial institutions. Between 2008 and 2010, Professor Halabi served as a Fellow of the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University focusing on the formation and implementation of international legal instruments regulating health-related policies of governments and businesses. In 2008, he advised the Presidential Health Care Policy Working Group on current and proposed approaches to international food and drug inspections. In 2010, Professor Halabi addressed a special committee of the United Nations on the relationship between decentralized health care systems and social inclusion as well as the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on Egypt's compliance with the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.