



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



48th DIRECTING COUNCIL

60th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 29 September-3 October 2008

Provisional Agenda Item 4.13

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15 August 2008

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL MINISTERIAL FORUM ON RESEARCH FOR HEALTH

Background

1. According to the findings of a 2002 evaluation in the Americas, essential research for the development and application of innovative solutions in health is among the least developed of the 11 Essential Public Health Functions. The indicators that assessed capacities to plan public health research received particularly low scores in most countries (1).
2. Research is crucial for development, and for the improvement of equity and public health. Functional national health research systems are needed to enable countries to develop and improve public health, to address the gap between what is known and what is done, and to deliver innovative solutions that improve health and equity (2)(3). This is particularly relevant in low resource scenarios where every expenditure is important and resources cannot be wasted on ineffective or unsafe practices.
3. The Mexico Statement on Health Research about Knowledge for Better Health: strengthening health systems, issued during the Ministerial Summit on Research for Health in Mexico City in 2004, listed strategies and actions needed to bolster national health research systems that encompass country needs through the production and use of scientific research that informs decisions for health (4).

Progress since the Mexico Ministerial Summit 2004

4. The 58th World Health Assembly acknowledged the Mexico Statement and issued Resolution WHA58.34 urging interested parties to act. WHO has coordinated the response with its Global and Regional Advisory Committees on Health Research and

Regional Offices, including technical cooperation for the subjects mentioned in the Resolution (5).

5. The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) has coordinated the response to Resolution WHA58.34 in the Americas and aligned its technical cooperation and its expected results with WHO, as reflected in PAHO's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 (6).

6. Ministers of Health and other interested parties have made a commitment to strengthen national health research systems and develop strategies to improve the systematic use and scientific proof that informs decisions on equity and health. This is reflected in the Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2017 (7), participation in discussions and consultations, and in the development of technical and Ministerial networks for this purpose. (8)

7. PAHO/WHO has organized and participated in regional consultations to draft the document *WHO Roles and Responsibilities in Health Research* and to prepare the WHO Research Strategy. PAHO/WHO and its Advisory Committee on Health Research are preparing a Research Policy for consultation and consideration of its Governing Bodies in 2009, which will complement WHO's Research Strategy.

8. Specific initiatives have been developed to boost public confidence in scientific research, increase access to published and unpublished research, facilitate the production and use of research material that informs health policies, strengthen national health research systems and research ethics, and make optimum use of scientific knowledge by tackling the unfinished agendas and preparing to face new challenges. Examples of initiatives made in response to this call include the development of the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform Search Portal, the regional implementation strategies (9)(10), the Evidence-Informed Policy Network for Clinical Trials – EVIPNet (11), the Evidence Portal (12), and the 1st Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health (13).

9. Leaders in health and research, policy makers, and other interested parties participated in sub regional meetings to discuss strategies for strengthening national health research systems, human resources for health research, funding and other issues along with the use of existing alliances and available consultative and working bodies (14)(15).

10. To respond to this challenge, develop capacities, expertise, collaboration and regional networks, PAHO/WHO is aligning its technical cooperation with PAHO/WHO Collaborating centers, networks and strategic partners.

Regional Support for the Bamako Ministerial Forum 2008

11. The Ministerial Forum on Research for Health to be held in Bamako, Mali, in November 2008 will serve as follow up to the Mexico Ministerial Summit. Participants in the Forum are therefore encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to continue and follow up on the initiatives developed in response to the Mexico Statement, thereby protecting the achievements and emphasizing the commitments made in response to World Health Assembly Resolution WHA58.34, which is geared towards the strengthening of national health research systems.

12. In the context of an integrated primary health care strategy, the Ministerial Forum is an opportunity to issue a call to identify and tackle unfinished agendas, such as neglected diseases, the unachieved Millennium Development Goals, health inequities, the improvement of health systems, and the implementation of simple and effective strategies that will improve the quality of life of peoples and facilitate development.

13. The Ministerial Forum also is an opportunity to identify, prioritize, and respond to new challenges, such as preparedness for environmental changes, emerging diseases, use of new technologies and their unexpected effects, the setting of new standards, the appearance of ethical dilemmas, and the development of tools to monitor research and improve its governance and stewardship, as well as for developments in innovation and intellectual property, such as the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property (16).

14. We believe that we must protect the significant achievements and progress of the past four years, supporting the initiatives put forward in response to World Health Assembly Resolution WHA58.34 (paragraph 9) and that we should continue to monitor and evaluate the development, implementation, and results of these initiatives.

15. We invite participation from the parties involved in the development and strengthening of national health research systems, especially in the health, science and technology, and education sectors, so that these sectors can put together integrated proposals that will strengthen health research.

16. We will continue to implement the proposals in the PAHO Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and the agreements reflected in the Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2012 (6)(7). In this vein, the First Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health underscored the need for collaboration to address common problems, including the need for the prioritization and management of health research that will be responsive to national and local needs and improve health and equity in Latin America. Regional cooperation touched on the Conference's four main lines of work: the development of

national health research systems; human resources to conduct health research; health research financing; and access to and development of products and innovation (13).

17. New challenges are attracting growing attention. For example: the need to coordinate and organize resources, initiatives, and agendas for health research; coordination with other sectors, such as science and technology or education; the response to climate changes and new political scenarios; the response to the countries' own cultural needs and realities when implementing and expanding research; increasing public confidence and social involvement in research; the need for basic, dependable instruments and data to monitor and strengthen research management; the creation of virtuous cycles in which research becomes an engine of development; the need to fund and coordinate the numerous opportunities and initiatives that are emerging because of the progress in health research and development.

18. A consultation has been organized that will involve different actors and will be extended to different forums and virtual meetings to enrich and complement the conclusions of the First Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health, as well as the various international debates that have already taken place (13)(17). These consultations enriched regional support for the Bamako Ministerial Forum. The consultation is open online at <http://new.paho.org/bamako2008esp>.

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Annex



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REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL MINISTERIAL FORUM ON RESEARCH FOR HEALTH

1. In May 2008 the Pan American Health Organization agreed with the Secretariat of the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health 2008, to take over the regional consultations and preparatory dialogues leading to the presentation of a regional contribution for the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health, to be held in Bamako, Mali, from 17 to 19 November 2008.
2. These open consultations were carried out through different forums and virtual meetings to which various interested players were invited, notably from the sectors of health, science and technology, and higher education. By the end of August 2008 the following contributions had been received and were posted on the consultation's website (<http://new.paho.org/Bamako2008eng>):

Strengthening Leadership

- Support countries in the development of clinical trials registries in coordination with WHO, avoiding duplication where possible.
- Ensure that research results (published or not) be made available as a prerequisite for public health research to be deemed ethical and managed with responsibility.
- Ensure access to research results that are essential for health and development:
 - o Broaden and maintain regional access to scientific evidence that is essential to improve public health
 - o Expand and maintain successful models such as the Virtual Health Libraries
 - o Promote Open Access, especially for knowledge produced with public funds

- Establish incentives to boost implementation research, innovation, and research on other key issues that enable development, equity and health.
- Ensure that progress and agreements reached in the Region and countries are acknowledged and considered in the development of new agendas.
- Ensure that WHO and other international agencies lead by example in monitoring resources and outputs of their research.

Engaging Relevant Constituencies

- Develop metrics to monitor and strengthen the health workforce that carries out research for health.
- Incorporate health workers who conduct research in human resources for health plans, linking them to the human resources for health goals and to the initiatives championed by WHO, the Pan American Health and Education Foundation (PAHEF), and the Human Resources Observatory.
- Develop and implement strategies that engage other sectors in addressing public health priorities that contribute to development, equity, and health.
- Encourage health authorities to exercise stewardship of the health research agenda, responding to national health research priorities.
- Establish national strategies to retain essential human resources for health research with the means and opportunities that allow them to thrive.
- Avoid duplication by harmonizing and allocating responsibilities in global research promotion initiatives such as the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Public Innovation and Intellectual Property, Patient Safety, Health Technology Assessment, Bioethics and Research Ethics forums, and other initiatives involving international organizations and leading research partners.
- Provide leadership for the development of research that responds to new challenges (such as climate change) in coordination with stakeholders and partners.

Increasing Accountability

- Ensure that current knowledge becomes an integral part of research proposals, and that these are balanced (e.g., addressing benefits and harms / advantages and disadvantages).
- Ensure that standardized and organized essential data illustrating health research production, financing and human resources be accessible for monitoring and

- evaluation purposes; develop a framework to monitor financial flows for research in the sectors of health, and science and technology.
- Evaluate the effects of health research investments considering its broad impact on the economy, trade balance, and the development of countries.
 - Ensure that leading organizations assess the effects of different governance and stewardship strategies on the development of research for health.
 - Develop basic indicators (standardized and implementable) to assess research development and coordination across sectors.
 - Set up oversight mechanisms that promote research as a public good; transparency and enjoying the public's trust; beneficial and respectful of human rights; while addressing the needs of society with equity.

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