GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH:
RECENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE PLANS

A slide presentation by
Dr. Tikki Pangestut - WHO

Research Policy & Cooperation Department
RPC/WHO/HQ – Geneva, Switzerland
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GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH:
RECENT ACTIVITIES
AND FUTURE PLANS

A REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH
POLICY & COOPERATION
DEPARTMENT (RPC/WHO/HQ)
What does RPC do?

- WHO Collaborating Centres
- Expert Advisory Panels
- Global ACHR (Advisory Committee on Health Research)
- ‘Intelligence’ role-monitoring scientific developments with health implications
- Advocacy & promotion of health research in developing countries
Highlights

- International Conference on Health Research for Development (Bangkok, October 2000)
- International Awards to Support Health Research for Development (Rockefeller)
- Post-Bangkok activities
- Information communication & dissemination - Health InterNetwork Research Pilot
Rockefeller Awards

- 10 awards made ($200,000 each)
- Focus on creative networking and partnerships to improve the enabling environment for research
- Tanzania, S. Africa, African network, Georgia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Mexico, Brazil
Post-Bangkok follow up …..

- Focus on countries - International Workshop on National Health Research Systems (Thailand, March 12-15, 2001)
Bangkok Action Plan-Strategies

- More knowledge
- More resources for research
- **Country focus** (NHRS)
- Capacity building
- Effective global governance
Strong and effective national health research systems

- Capacity building
- Knowledge production
- Mobilizing more resources for research
- Effective global governance (naturally evolving)
Post-Bangkok follow up ......

- Focus on countries - International Workshop on National Health Research Systems (Thailand, March 12-15, 2001)
- World Health Report on Health Research Systems?
RPC’S FUTURE FOCUS:

HEALTH RESEARCH SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT IN COUNTRIES

MONITORING, ANALYSING AND IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

• Resource flows in research
• Assessing performance
HIN Research Pilot

- Bridging the digital divide—UN Millennium Action Plan Health InterNetwork (HIN)
- **Research Pilot** to provide access to high quality scientific information via the Internet to research centres in developing countries
- Consortium: WHO (RPC/IMD/HIN), Open Society Institute, ISI, SilverPlatter, Elsevier
- First pilot year, 9 centres, 8 countries (WHO CC); 5 year horizon, 30-40 countries
Free access to .............

- **ISI Web of Science**: covers 5,600 journals in science/biomedicine, social sciences, art & humanities (1971)

- **SilverPlatter**: access to databases (BIOSIS, CAB Health, Cambridge Life Sciences, Medline, POPLINE, Pascal Biomed) and SilverLinker & BuildWare software

- **Elsevier**: full text journals (152)

- **WHO publications**
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Global Advisory Committee for Health Research (ACHR)

Chair : Mahmoud Fathalla (Egypt)

Zulfiqar Bhutta (Pakistan)  Barry Bloom (USA)
Marian Jacobs (S. Africa)  Wendy Baldwin (USA)
Gita Sen (India)  Bruce Sayers (UK)
Krongthong Thimasarn (Thailand)  Maxime Schwartz (France)
Judith Whitworth (Australia)  Lars Walloe (Norway)
Fumimaro Takaku (Japan)  Cesar Victora (Brazil)
ACHR Agenda Topics (Oct, 2000)

- WHO’s research activities
- Research capacity strengthening in developing countries
- New genetics
- Ethics of research & gender perspectives
- Links with regional ACHR’s
- 39th Session on June 28-30, 2001
Key ELSI issues

(Francis Collins, NHGRI Director, Lyon, Feb 01)

- Will effective legislation be developed against genetic discrimination?
- Can we shepherd new genetic technologies into clinical practice?
- Can health care professionals and the public become genetic literate in time?
- Will benefits be available only to the privileged few?
- Will we succumb to genetic determinism?
- Will we reach consensus about the limits of genetic technologies for trait enhancement?
“We also need to look ahead and think about the implications of knowledge resulting from new advances in genomics…..”

“Our challenge will be fourfold:

Anticipate consequences rather than reacting to effects
Assess ethical aspects
Determine which are public goods (and thus be protected from commercial exploitation)
Ensure widest possible access…..”

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Lecture to LSE, March 16, 2001
ACHR SPECIAL REPORT ON GENOMICS AND HEALTH

- Focus on the tremendous scientific potential of the post-genomics era for health improvement ....
- ....but acknowledging that realisation of this potential must take into account ethical, legal & social implications
- Focus on impact & implications for the developing countries
ACHR SPECIAL REPORT ON GENOMICS AND HEALTH

- Intended as a road map and vision document on the potential of genomics
- Will not define specific guidelines or WHO policies on the key issues
- Targeted at a broad audience
- To support WHO’s role as an advocate of global health development, to ensure that the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged in developing countries share in the benefits of the post-genome era
ACHR SPECIAL REPORT ON GENOMICS AND HEALTH

- Completion by end 2001
- Presentation to WHO Executive Board, January, 2002
- Key policy position document
- Process to include regional consultations and hearings (Brasilia, July 16-17)
- ACHR to be helped by Consultant Team
Issues for consideration

- Potential benefits? Which technologies?
- How can DC’s truly benefit? What needs to be done?
- WHO’s role?
- ELSI implications? Gender implications?
- Reality behind the hype?
- Activity/capacity? Participation of DC’s?
  If yes, how and in which areas?
- Level of public awareness?
Concluding reflections......

- Health has a high visibility
- Value of knowledge in the forefront
- New funding sources for health research
- Renewed awareness of the importance of research within ‘one’ WHO
- Renewed commitment from the health research community to work together to develop and test new approaches