



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH

1. This document summarizes the deliberations of the 40th Meeting of the PAHO/WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR) held in Montego Bay, Jamaica from 29 April to 1 May 2007. The meeting was of a special nature because it convened 11 new members of the Committee. At the start of the meeting, Dr. Victor Penchaszadeh stepped down as chairman, and the PAHO Director presented Dr. John Lavis as the new chairman. Participants at the meeting included regional and global organizations that support research for public health and representatives of institutions of the English-speaking Caribbean, which presented their experiences in the field. The meeting also included an update and discussion of the Organization's projects and initiatives and the coordination of research by the Research Promotion and Development Unit. Agreement was reached on a work agenda for the ACHR, which issued its recommendations during the final session of the meeting.

Topics addressed in the recommendations made at the final session of the meeting of the ACHR:

- (a) Develop a research policy proposal for the Organization;
- (b) Establish a PAHO research inventory that identifies and describes research in which PAHO offices participate;
- (c) Facilitate the participation of the Member States in the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform promoted by WHO;
- (d) Rethink the need to reestablish the Research Grants Program within the framework of the Organization's research policy;

- (e) Undertake the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) initiative in the Region in order to strengthen the development and use of research, promote regional networks and collaborative work, and develop responses based on local needs and contexts.

Developments since the 40th Meeting of the ACHR

- (a) Planning and coordination of activities with the World Health Organization's 47th Advisory Committee on Health Research;
- (b) Contributions toward launching the EVIPNet;
- (c) Participation in joint events to bolster work through networks aimed at strengthening the capacity to synthesize, produce, and use scientific evidence in the Region;
- (d) Support for the development of a strategy to design the regional initiative for health research core data in the Region of the Americas;
- (e) Advisory services for the regional proposal on mechanisms that support the primary registry of clinical trials in the Region;
- (f) Holding of a meeting with representatives of the University of the West Indies aimed at strengthening scientific networks and capacity for the English-speaking Caribbean.

Next Steps

2. A discussion of the proposal for a PAHO health research policy is scheduled for November 2007, and preparation of a consultation on this topic is planned for April 2008.

Annex

REPORT TO THE DIRECTOR: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

40th Meeting of the PAHO/WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research held in Montego Bay, Jamaica from 29 April to 1 May 2007

1. This document summarizes the deliberations during the 40th Meeting of the PAHO/WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR), which analyzed the Organization's technical cooperation in research and the projects coordinated by the Research Promotion and Development Unit (HSS/RC), and which defined the ACHR's working agenda and how it will support the efforts of the Organization. The Committee issued its recommendations during the final session of the meeting.

Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Health Research to the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

- (a) Congratulate PAHO on its efforts to develop a research policy for the Organization and support the continuation of preparatory work on such a policy. The ACHR commits to supporting this work in order to ensure that a carefully considered draft of a research policy can be discussed by the Member States, interested parties in the countries, and international agencies as part of a broad consultative exercise that will take place in April 2008.
- (b) Provide through PAHO the leadership to promote regional initiatives that support the development and implementation of a PAHO research policy, including, for example, preparation of the regional meeting to discuss strengthening national health research systems. The meeting will be co-sponsored by the Council on Health for Development, the Ministry of Health of Brazil, and the Global Forum for Health Research, among others, and will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in April 2008.
- (c) Support the continuation of preparatory work to establish a PAHO health research inventory that identifies and describes the research in which the Organization participates.
- (d) Continue work that enables the Member States to participate in the World Health Organization's International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP). This includes evaluating the development of tools and strategies that facilitate the adoption and use of registries in the Region.

- (e) The Committee supports the reestablishment of research grants, taking into consideration the following points: i) development of the PAHO research policy (from which the objectives will arise); ii) documentation of the priorities of the countries, the existence of the financial and human resource capacity to conduct research that responds to these priorities, and the persistence of gaps that only PAHO could fill; iii) an evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of requiring a steering role of health ministries in countries where research will be carried out; and iv) a study of the determinants of outcomes of grant applications.
- (f) The Committee supports the continuation of preparatory work to launch the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) initiative in the Region as a promising mechanism to strengthen research and its use in health systems and health research. The Committee emphasizes the need for an ongoing commitment by the ministries of health of each country to provide the resources necessary to develop the EVIPNet as a component of health systems and health research, as well as the need to involve existing organizations, networks, and initiatives at the regional, subregional, and national levels.

Summary

2. The Secretariat of the Advisory Committee on Health Research convened the 40th Meeting of the Committee at the request of the Director of the Pan American Health Organization in order to analyze the Organization's technical cooperation directed toward promoting research, as well as projects of the Research Promotion and Development Unit (HSS/RC), and to define the work agenda of the ACHR and the manner in which it will support the efforts of the Organization. The Committee issued its recommendations at the final session of the meeting.

3. Since its inception in 1962, the ACHR has functioned under different arrangements and made a variety of contributions, such as helping in formulating policies and strategies for cooperation in PAHO research, and in reviewing research activities in which the Organization has participated. For the 40th Meeting, the ACHR convened 11 new members of the Committee. At the beginning of the meeting, Dr. Victor Penchaszadeh stepped down as chairman, and the Director of PAHO presented Dr. John Lavis as the new chairman. The members of the ACHR come from various disciplines and institutions related to health research in the Region.

4. The Director expressed her interest in moving up a second meeting of the Committee in 2007 in order to maintain the excellent dynamic at a time when there have been great advances in development. This would be followed by another meeting sometime around April 2008, when the research policy draft should be ready to be submitted for a broader review.

5. The principal matters emphasized during the debates were: a) preparation of a Health Agenda for the Americas, which is in progress and which, if approved by the countries, will determine PAHO's technical cooperation in the coming years; b) approval by the Pan American Sanitary Conference of a strategic five-year plan; and c) the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals before 2015.

6. The agenda of the meeting was structured in the following blocs:¹

(a) Opening of the meeting and presentation of the Committee members.

(b) Presentations:

(i) Technical cooperation of the Research Promotion and Development Unit, including the PAHO research inventory, participation in the International Registry of Clinical Trials, and the Research Grants Program;

(ii) The Evidence-Informed Policy Network (EVIPNet) initiative in the Americas;

(iii) The status of health research policies in the Americas and the proposal to develop the Organization's research policy;

(iv) The Regional Health Research Data Initiative for the Region of the Americas;

(v) Selected global and regional initiatives and networks, and their interest in supporting the efforts of PAHO to promote the use of research findings in the Region.

(c) Health research in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean.

7. It is expected that the advisory services of the ACHR in the areas agreed upon will support leadership in the Organization's research, strengthen the production and use of research findings for health in the Region, strengthen the management of research within the Organization, and support the progressive development of national health research systems that contribute to health and equity in the Member States.

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¹ Detailed information on the deliberations, presentations, and recommendations can be found in the *40th Meeting of the PAHO/WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR), Report to the Director*. (AHCR40/2007.10). Montego Bay, Jamaica, 29 April to 1 May 2007.