

Recommendations by the 45th Advisory Committee on Health Research of the Pan American Health Organization presented to the Director

ACHR members commend PAHO's Secretariat for the continued progress in all key domains covered by the PAHO Policy on Research for Health and for its ongoing work with strategic partners that significantly expands its reach and visibility in the Americas. This progress and approach continue to place PAHO at the forefront of important international developments in research for health and ACHR members hope that this will continue.

Five ACHR recommendations pertain to taking steps to ensure that the [PAHO Policy on Research for Health](#) achieves its desired impact and that this impact is measured:

- 1) The research coordination team within PAHO's Secretariat* should prepare within the next quarter an implementation plan for the Policy, focusing on what the 'business owner' can achieve and taking care to distinguish those activities and outputs that support the Secretariat and those that support Member States;
- 2) The research coordination team within PAHO's Secretariat should prepare within the next year the inputs required to ensure that the following documents and processes appropriately reflect the goals of the PAHO Policy on Research for Health:
 - a. WHO-wide strategic plan for 2014-2019 and PAHO strategic plan for 2014-2019;
 - b. PAHO's 'Health in the Americas' mid-term assessment;
 - c. PAHO's 'public health functions' performance assessment, particularly in relation to the research function; and
 - d. (If appropriate) an implementation strategy for the Policy to orient the collaborative work on research for health in the region.
- 3) The research coordination team within PAHO's Secretariat should develop measurable indicators related to 1 and 2 (where possible aligning with indicators proposed by WHO to monitor the implementation of its strategy on research for health) to ensure that future ACHR meetings can be informed by a 'report' card about progress in the implementation of the Policy and an assessment of the factors hampering progress in particular domains.
- 4) PAHO's Secretariat should undertake the preparation of the implementation strategy and workplans and related inputs to PAHO-wide and WHO-wide initiatives in a participatory way that ensures that it is informed by lessons learned from the past and is motivated by a strong sense of ownership in their future use.
- 5) PAHO's Secretariat should undertake research when it is uniquely positioned to do so and when the findings of the research can be expected to directly support the implementation of the Policy or to serve organizational development objectives.

Many ACHR recommendations address each of the goals and related objectives articulated in the [PAHO Policy on Research for Health](#).

Quality: Promote the generation of relevant, ethical and high-quality research for health

- 6) PAHO's Secretariat should continue to pursue the objectives described in the Policy but with more explicit efforts to document the links between its work (e.g., [PAHO's research registry](#), [Health Research Web](#), [International Clinical Trial Registry Platform](#)) and these objectives.

* The Secretariat of the Pan American Health Organization is the Pan American Sanitary Bureau(PASB); PAHO is comprised by the Member States and the PASB.

- 7) PAHO's Secretariat should consider re-wording the objective related to incentives so that the focus is on identifying and promoting the use of a range of possible incentives to support high-priority research in the region and not on developing the incentives itself, which is the responsibility of Member States.

Governance: Strengthen research governance and promote the definition of research agendas

- 8) PAHO's Secretariat should cluster and prioritize the existing eight objectives, giving particular emphasis to technical assistance for strengthening national health research systems that provides a menu of options that can be selected and adapted for each country.
- 9) PAHO's Secretariat should, in addressing objective f), support intergovernmental dialogue and interdonor coordination (such as the type being undertaken through the 'Enhancing Support for Strengthening the Effectiveness of National Capacity Efforts' (ESSENCE) initiative) to ensure that common sub-regional and regional research agendas are identified and supported where possible.
- 10) PAHO's Secretariat should strive to mainstream research for health in tangible ways that add value to the work of others within the organization while retaining a responsible team to champion and monitor these efforts.

Human resources: Improve competencies of and support for human resources involved in research for health

- 11) PAHO's Secretariat should give greater attention to the most strategic of the seven objectives listed in the Policy, give a more strategic and mainstreaming orientation to the activities it undertakes in achieving these objectives, and ensure that the long-term goal is that other parts of the organization and Member States address these objectives themselves.
- 12) PAHO's Secretariat should continue to support strong coordination of its capacity-building efforts with other international agencies and play a direct role in capacity building primarily when there is a substantial gap that the Secretariat is uniquely positioned to fill because of skills and experience (e.g., preparing evidence briefs and organizing policy dialogues) or because of the potential for supporting inter-country learning.

Partnerships: Seek efficiencies and enhanced impact and appropriation of research through effective and strategic alliances, collaboration and the building of public trust, and engagement in research

- 13) PAHO's Secretariat should continue to develop and sustain partnerships with groups and organizations (including the technical secretariats of health authorities, non-governmental organizations and, for topics like non-communicable diseases, the private sector) that share its vision and values and (when the benefits justify the costs) undertake joint projects with them, while being conscious of the need to do so in a systematic and strategic way so as to make the best use of limited resources and in a way that assures gender and ethnocultural balance.
- 14) PAHO's Secretariat should document periodically the processes that are based in other parts of the organization but highly relevant to partnerships focused on research for health.
- 15) PAHO's Secretariat should consider preparing a document that can be presented to other UN regional agencies about how to incorporate research in their work and continuing to advocate for the re-establishment of regular meetings of the WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research (which provides significant opportunities for inter-regional learning and support).

Standards: Foster best practices and enhanced standards for research

- 16) PAHO's Secretariat should ensure that its work in fostering best practices and enhancing standards for research is aligned with WHO activities in this area, and advances the public interest in tangible terms (e.g., by ensuring that citizens and their governments know what research was done, can take action to address gaps and concerns, and can communicate the rationale for action effectively).
- 17) PAHO's Secretariat should continue to promote the development of practices that contribute to better quality and ethical research for health, which includes establishing and maintaining clinical trial registries, expanding the contents of the registries to include a broader range of studies and the results of registered studies, debating the pros and cons of expanding the contents of the registries to include raw data, and considering a major public campaign to promote trial registration and the rationale for it.
- 18) PAHO's Secretariat should consider developing criteria to support ethics review committees in knowing what they should be looking for in different types of research studies (including qualitative research).

Impact: Promote the dissemination and utilization of research findings

- 19) PAHO's Secretariat should continue to find ways to pursue the objectives related to this goal, through finding the resources necessary to support technical assistance both internally within the organization and externally to country teams, and identifying and capitalizing upon synergies with other Policy goals. The Secretariat should consider conducting an economic evaluation of these activities that enables meaningful comparisons of the many possible investments in research and in other policy support functions, and potentially undertaking more initiatives to stimulate the demand for research evidence, to support its use and to narrow the research-to-reporting gap.
- 20) PAHO's Secretariat should accelerate its efforts to systematically document current practices in supporting evidence-informed policymaking (e.g., rapid-response functions) and their impacts, and more generally support research about such practices and their impacts.

The final ACHR recommendation relate to specific issues:

- 21) PAHO's Secretariat and the two members of the World Health Report Scientific Advisory Panel present in the ACHR meeting communicate to WHO the wish that:
 - a. the World Health Report achieve the vision of a creative and compelling profile of how many types of research can concretely improve the health of people that motivates Member States and key stakeholders to invest in research and in efforts to capture its benefits, as the ACHR has repeatedly advised when it was asked to devote parts of its past meetings to the report;
 - b. the sponsors of the World Health Report weigh the pros and cons of continuing the focus on research in specific service to achieving universal health coverage (in which case a much great effort should be made to incorporate messages from the first draft of the World Health Report, subtitled "No Health Without Research") or pursuing a focus on universal health coverage in 2013 and committing to a report wholly dedicated to research for health in 2014; and
 - c. the sponsors of the World Health Report weigh the pros and cons of putting an edited version of the first draft of the World Health Report, which by all accounts was closest to the ACHR's original vision, into the public domain through another route.

- 22) The ACHR hopes for the speedy resolution of the funding challenge facing the Spanish version of the Cochrane Library, which includes the consideration of this issue in the negotiation of the new agreement with the publisher, and supports the ongoing dialogue about how to better incorporate The Cochrane Collaboration in supporting the implementation of the Policy, particularly the Knowledge Translation activities, as well as better monitoring of the usage of the Cochrane Library by the countries in the region.

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