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*Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Health Research
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16-18 July 1997
Washington, D.C.*

REPORT OF THE ACHR SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH SYSTEMS AND SERVICES RESEARCH



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CONTENTS

Page

1. WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE 1

2. FUTURE PLANS FOR ACTIVATION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE 2

Report of the ACHR Subcommittee on Health Systems and Services Research

1. Work of the Subcommittee

Since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR), the Subcommittee on Health Systems and Services Research (HSSR) has worked with the Research Coordination Program (HDR), Division of Health and Human Development (HDP), of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) toward the conceptualization and organization of a regional program of research on “organizational and financial changes of health sector reform.” This program of research was described in a brochure prepared by HDR and disseminated throughout the Region. The Call for Proposals indicated an interest in receipt of proposals requesting amounts up to US\$30,000 addressing the organizational and financial changes and their impact on the equity, quality, and efficiency of health systems and services. Letters of intent requested in this solicitation were received from more than 50 organizations in several countries.

These letters of intent were reviewed by PAHO staff and the Chairman of the Subcommittee and invitations to submit final proposals were extended to twenty applicants. Once the proposals were received, PAHO staff and Subcommittee members read and evaluated these proposals and submitted their evaluations to HDR. Decisions were made to fund a total of five proposals, which are listed in Table 1.

Except for these efforts to launch a small grants program for research on aspects of health sector reform, the Subcommittee has initiated no other activities in the interim since the last ACHR meeting. A meeting of the Subcommittee had been planned for Cuernavaca, Mexico in the fall of 1996, but had to be cancelled due to a conflict in scheduling among PAHO staff offices. Additional meetings of the Subcommittee have yet to be set.

XXXII MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH (ACHR)
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2. Future Plans for Activation of the Subcommittee

Reorganization of PAHO senior staff in the past year has constituted a significant reason for delay in the work of the Subcommittee on Health Systems and Services Research (HSSR). With the integration of two previously separate divisions to form the new Division of Health Systems and Services Development, under the Direction of Dr. Daniel López-Acuña, the prospects for a new level of emphasis on health systems and services research within PAHO has emerged. As the new Division has taken shape, it is becoming clearer that health services research can assist in acquiring the information by which meaningful changes in health care systems can occur. Discussions between Dr. López-Acuña and the Subcommittee Chairman have led to an agreement that the Subcommittee will be asked during the coming year to convene for the explicit purpose of reacting to substantive program plans of the Division and for planning ways in which the resources and capacities of health services research entities within the Region can be brought to bear in efforts to achieve the goals of health sector reform.

Among the issues being discussed is an expanded role for World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centers with an emphasis on health systems and services research within the Region. Following a one-day "open house" visit to PAHO on the afternoon of 13 June 1997 by representatives of the Collaborating Centers in the United States, it was clear that there is a greater role for these institutes and centers in addressing the most pressing problems and issues of health reform throughout the Americas. It is apparent that there are far too few of the existing institutes and centers in North America working in health services research and health policy analysis affiliated with PAHO and WHO as Collaborating Centers. Only four such centers and institutes in the U.S. have been identified with explicit focus on the issues and problems in the field of health systems and services research. Efforts by the Subcommittee in the year ahead will be directed toward the identification of such organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada who can be configured in partnership arrangements with similar organizations in other countries and with who they may undertake joint venture projects on these issues.

The Subcommittee remains concerned with the effort to develop further avenues for the dissemination of research taking place in Caribbean and South American nations addressing

***XXXII MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH (ACHR)
Washington, D.C., 16-18 July 1997***

health systems and services issues. Further discussion is planned on these problems, with the prospect for beginning a new journal for the dissemination of such research published in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

Finally, the Subcommittee is interested in leading the effort to convene, or otherwise facilitate the communication among leading health services research personnel in the Americas. Explorations in the coming year may involve the consideration of Internet-based means of communication, as well as the possibility of a Region-wide conference on these issues.