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**A RESEARCH PLAN FOR STUDYING
SYSTEMS OF HEALTH-MEDICAL SERVICES**

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PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office of the

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A RESEARCH PLAN FOR STUDYING SYSTEMS
OF HEALTH-MEDICAL SERVICES*

The following proposal was developed in collaboration with the Medical Care Research Center of Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri with the aim of finding better means of organizing medical care services for lower-income groups in Latin America by analyzing the factors responsible for the efficient utilization of those services.

The experiment would consist in selecting two urban areas in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, which have similar socio-economic characteristics, and establishing in one of them a system whereby a group of physicians would provide medical care to a limited number of families and guide them towards better utilization of the public health services existing in the community. Each of these physicians would be responsible for a given number of families and would be paid on a family unit basis. Each of these families would be permitted to change their physician, provided it could show good cause. The second group of families would act as controls and their present system of medical care would not be changed.

The investigation would last three to five years and would be preceded by a pilot study lasting up to one year.

The planning phase would make possible the obtaining of the basic data and the analysis of the socio-economic status of the two population groups in question. The data required would be analyzed to establish a

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base line with which to assess changes occurring during the experiment. A study would also be made of the resources needed, such as medical and para-medical services, specialists, hospitals, etc. A grant is needed for this preliminary phase.

The following activities would be carried out during the proposed one-year planning period:

1. A study of the urban districts that are to serve as experimental and control area so as to verify and complete the available information on health problems of the districts. The study would cover the following main aspects:
 - a. Socio-economic characteristics of the families.
 - b. Morbidity data.
 - c. Costs of medical care and health care services in general, and sources of financing.
 - d. Attitude of the population towards present medical care services and health care in general.
2. Developing and testing the tools to be used for obtaining information, including sampling, questionnaires, preparation of the necessary indices, selection and training of interviewers, etc.
3. Once the data mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 above are obtained, details will be discussed with the Ministry of Health and the other health services, such as welfare, social security, and the like, regarding the procedures and their participation in the experiment.

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The following points would need to be decided upon:

- a. How many families should be assigned to each physician?
 - b. Should the physicians be grouped together in the out-patient department of a nearby hospital, or a health center or should they be individually distributed throughout the area?
 - c. System of paying the physicians.
 - d. General guidance and supervision of physicians.
 - e. Specific relationships with hospitals, health centers, specialists, etc.
 - f. Possibilities of charging the families for these services.
 - g. Guidance to be given to the families that will participate in the program.
 - h. Frequency and type of surveys on health and socio-economic conditions to be undertaken in both districts, and whether or not the families that move out of the two districts should be replaced by other families.
 - i. Circumstances under which free choice of physician is to be permitted.
 - j. Evaluation techniques to be used.
4. The final task will be an analysis of all the data collected and an examination of the methods and the development of the general study plan in all its details.

It is further planned to appoint a committee composed of the following persons: the two co-investigators, one from University of Washington and the other from the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; a consultant on

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planning health research programs from the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health; the Director of the Medical Research Center of the University of Washington; the Dean of the School of Sociology of the National University of Colombia; and the PASB Chief Country Advisor for Colombia, who will act as the coordinator.

The Ministry of Health and other health authorities of Colombia, as well as the educational authorities of the School of Medicine, School of Public Health, and School of Sociology, have all expressed their great interest in this type of investigation, which, it is hoped, will provide much information on the administration of medical services and will also serve as a practical training ground for both students and professionals of various disciplines related to health.