

Pan American Health Organization

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL RESEARCH

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Item 18 of the Agenda

A PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR ARGENTINA

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I. Historical Background

1. Early in 1965, the Minister of Health of Argentina requested the Pan American Health Organization "to identify the needs and the opportunities for research in the field of public health in Argentina, and to recommend a research program for the Ministry of Health." These instructions were supplemented verbally in the initial discussion (February 2, 1965) with the Honorable Dr. Arturo Oñativia, Minister of Public Health and Social Welfare, who requested particular examination of problems relative to:

- a. The coordination of research among components of the Ministry of Health, and between the Ministry and other agencies, public and private.
- b. The establishment of research priorities in various subject matter areas such as nutrition, infectious diseases, environmental sanitation, and organization of health services.
- c. The need for, and use and administration of a special Public Health Research Fund to support research training and research grants.
- d. Investigation and study of the administration and provision of medical care (this is a major responsibility of the Ministry which poses many questions, administrative and technical).
- e. Role of the National Institute of Health of Argentina, an existing research component of the Ministry of Health.

II. Objectives

1. The objectives of a public health research program for Argentina are:

*Prepared by Dr. Robert Dyar for the Fifth Meeting of the PAHO/ACMR. Aspects of this report have appeared in RES 4/5 at the Fourth Meeting of the PAHO/ACMR.

- a. To promote the development of the public health research potential of governmental and non-governmental agencies of Argentina.
- b. To initiate and support a continuing program of recruitment and training of scientific personnel essential to the conduct of public health research and to maintain and increase the pool of scientific manpower available for research.
- c. To promote, develop, and support a program of applied research directed toward the solution of the important problems of community health and preventive medicine of Argentina.

III. Requirements

- 1. In order to support and conduct public health research, certain requirements exist. Among these are:
 - a. A climate or environment for public health research.
 - b. The availability of well-trained personnel, qualified to do research, or the resources to recruit and train such personnel.
 - c. The existence of a system of public health practice identifying problems, providing good service, maintaining adequate records, up-grading staff.
 - d. A broad system for the generation of valid research data.

IV. Methods of Program Development

- 1. The establishment of a research policy for the Ministry, including a statement of:
 - a. Relationship of research to major health problems.
 - b. Utilization of the national scientific research community for advisory purposes.
 - c. Initial emphasis on research training and development of research capacity.

- d. Use of a project system for support of research, based on merit, and on judgment by peers in making awards, on stability of support, on proper requirements of accountability on the part of awardees, and designed to be free of political interference.
 - e. Relationship to other national research interests and resources.
- 2. The establishment of a Public Health Research Fund to support public health research and research training.
 - 3. The development and support of both intra- and extra-ministerial administrative mechanisms; for the support of the research program utilizing appropriate national professional and scientific resources (including advisory personnel) to insure a research and research training program which will:
 - a. Encourage and support research of important national priority.
 - b. Provide support on the basis of qualifications of investigators, scientific merit of proposals and potential for the development, training and retention of staff.
 - 4. The accomplishment of organizational and functional changes within the Argentine public health system.

It is recognized that any program of this sort must be gradual in accomplishment. If the primary goals are always paramount, and every step is carefully examined in terms of its contribution to those goals, then the objectives will be attained. It is especially important that the development and conduct of the program be carefully reviewed and evaluated periodically, and that the support and advice of the academic and professional communities be carefully considered at all times.