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HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS 2017

Introduction

1. One of the core mandates of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is to collect and disseminate information on health conditions and trends in the countries and territories of the Americas. Health in the Americas is PAHO's flagship publication in response to this mandate.
2. In accordance with Resolution CD7.R23 of the Seventh Directing Council, each country and territory was asked to complete a four-year report on health conditions, focusing especially on health statistics, for the Fourteenth Pan American Sanitary Conference held in Santiago, Chile, in October 1954. Publication of the report, currently known as Health in the Americas, has continued on a periodic basis since then.
3. The publication examines the health conditions, trends, and challenges in the Americas. The series began as a mere compilation of data, but it is gradually taking on the character of a reference work for use both within the various countries and at the regional level in acquiring knowledge about public health problems and challenges and about the resources available for solving them.
4. Health in the Americas 2017 both upholds the tradition of previous editions and represents a turning point in relation to the past.

Background

5. The 2017 edition of Health in the Americas presents a prospective view of health in the Region. Like previous editions, it is based on the most recent data gathered at the regional level and from the countries and territories of the Americas. The report covers:
 - a) the foundations of health;
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- b) the most relevant challenges for health in the Region;
- c) a review of regional health over the past five years; and
- d) the future outlook for health in the Region.

6. This new edition offers a summary of achievements and challenges at the regional and country levels, which are detailed in full in the online companion volume. It focuses on paths leading to a vision of the future of health in the Americas, covering topics such as universal access to health, major health problems and challenges, trends over the past five years, and the Region's health outlook going forward, complemented by the countries' and territories' health status reports.

7. Health in the Americas 2017 maintains continuity from the 15 previous editions in several ways. It provides an assessment of the health situation at the regional and country levels, covering the preceding five years and presenting a prospective view of health for the next 10 years. The 2017 edition also continues to highlight issues that are at the heart of the conceptual debate and the practice of public health, as well as the planning, design, and implementation of health policies. Finally, since the 2002 edition, Health in the Americas has been devoting space to issues such as social inequalities in health; the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health; sustainable development; and health systems reform. The 2017 edition continues to highlight these concerns.

The 2017 Edition

8. This publication points out current and potential roadblocks and documents the changes taking place in today's health system structures, functions, organization, and policies, with a view to making the future vision attainable and setting a viable course toward it.

9. In an important innovation, this edition transforms the publication from a reference document and repository of statistics into an interactive platform using modern information technology. Using this resource, health stakeholders in diverse sectors can find and interact with reliable, high-quality information that is regularly updated. At the same time, the platform provides a forum where stakeholders can offer their own contributions, both from the front lines at country level, where health policies are crafted, and from academia and the scientific community.

10. Health in the Americas 2017 includes a series of subproducts that were developed to expand its dissemination and use. These include podcasts, high-quality e-pubs in multiple formats, and profiles for researchers, information and communications professionals, and decision makers. There is also a content customization tool called "My Health in the Americas" that allows individual users to define the content they want to read.

11. In addition to the interactive platform, a printed version includes the following:

- a) a discussion of universal health, its values and principles, and strategies for action;
 - b) a review of the leading health problems and challenges in the Region that are exerting the greatest pressure on health systems within physical, social, and environment contexts;
 - c) a regional overview with an analysis of the health situation and its trends, as well as a prospective view of health in the Region with some of the main characteristics of the roads under construction leading to the vision for the future; and
 - d) health reports from 52 countries and territories of the Region of the Americas, describing the main highlights of the health status of each of them. Each country profile presents selected basic indicators based on the latest available data, together with information on the specific health achievements and gaps that need to be addressed going forward.
12. Together, the Regional and Country sections provide detailed analysis and general insights on the context and on changes needed to improve health in the Region of the Americas.

Overview of chapters

13. Chapter 1 presents the concept of universal health, which includes both universal access to health and universal health coverage as a matter of right. The chapter covers five subtopics: *a)* values and principles of universal health; *b)* access to comprehensive, equitable, and quality health services; *c)* social determinants of health in the Americas; *d)* stewardship and governance toward universal health; and *e)* health financing in the Americas.

14. Chapter 2 is devoted to the analysis of overarching drivers, that is, health problems and health determinants that represent the greatest burden and challenges to the population of the Region. The chapter addresses three overlapping topics: *a)* health problems that are considered critical because of their severity, high prevalence, associated costs, or impacts on population health; *b)* environmental and social drivers that are out of the direct or exclusive control of the health sector; and *c)* barriers associated with the unpreparedness of many health systems in the Region to cope with challenges posed by health problems and their determinants, and especially by the rampant and pervasive inequities in health. Health goals are no longer limited to reducing disease prevalence or incidence or to improving health services; they also call for reducing health inequities by including health in all policies and understanding health as both a component of and a critical factor in sustainable development.

15. Chapter 3 analyzes the general health situation in the Region of the Americas in the last five years, with three subtopics: *a)* socioeconomic inequalities in health in the

Region; *b*) health status of the population; and *c*) the quest for universal health, with a summary of indicators on health systems performance.

16. Chapter 4 focuses on the future by building on the ideas and proposals from earlier chapters, which identified health drivers as well as current and anticipated challenges for health systems in the Region. The following topics are addressed in the context of the Region of the Americas: *a*) pathways to the health-related Sustainable Development Goals; *b*) the construction of health throughout the life course; *c*) the dual role of health as an essential component of and a prerequisite for development; *d*) the reforms in health systems needed to overcome the fragmentation and segmentation that stand in the way of progress toward universal health; and *e*) the role of public health in the information society.

17. The 2017 edition also presents 52 country and territory health reports, each of which covers:

- a) the main challenges in the country (critical health problems; chronic conditions; human resources, knowledge, technology, and health information; climate change and human security; aging; migration; monitoring of the organization, availability, and performance of the health system);
- b) health situation and trends (health in different population groups, mortality, and morbidity);
- c) outlook (prospective analysis based on a review of the health conditions in the country and global health drivers); and
- d) highlights of relevant problems and achievements in the country.

Action by the Pan American Sanitary Conference

18. The Conference is requested to take note of this report and make the comments it deems appropriate.

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