

# 154th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 16-20 June 2014

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*Provisional Agenda Item 7.4*

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## REPORT OF THE PAHO/WHO ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH

### Introduction

1. This document summarizes the deliberations of the 45th Session of the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR) of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization that took place at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada from 17 to 19 October 2012. The meeting was hosted by the McMaster Health Forum, a PAHO/WHO partner that is part of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy.

### Background

2. Since its inception in 1962, the membership reports and historical contributions of ACHR can be found at the ACHR website<sup>1</sup> (1). Additional background can be found in the previous report made to the Governing Bodies (2). The Committee holds virtual interactions and meetings in order to provide continuous advice on specific issues that may arise in between face-to-face sessions.

3. The purpose of ACHR meetings is to advise PAHO about its strategic approach to the production and use of research for health. In 2009, ACHR advised PAHO about the implementation and advancement of its Policy on Research for Health (Resolution CD49.R10 [2009]) (3). For the 44th meeting, the Committee was asked to: *a*) provide inputs, action-oriented recommendations, and guidance on a draft of a strategy and plan of action to complement the Policy on Research for Health *b*); to consolidate the work for the incoming Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; and *c*) to advise on how to transition of the research function into a cross-cutting pillar of the Organization.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.paho.org/achr](http://www.paho.org/achr)

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4. During this meeting, McMaster University announced the extension of a Memorandum of Understanding between PAHO and McMaster.<sup>2</sup> PASB's Director recognized the achievements made with support from the ACHR and presented a plaque to the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Health Research.

5. The Committee reviewed progress on the recommendations of the 44th Advisory Committee on Health Research of 2011 (3), progress on the activities undertaken during 2011-2012, activities planned for 2013-2014 and beyond. Key recommendations were presented to the Director and are included in the Annex (3). Recommendations were organized as per the six goals of PAHO's Policy on Research for Health (4), as follows:

- a) **Quality**: promote the generation of relevant, ethical, and quality research,
- b) **Governance**: strengthen research governance and promote the definition of research agendas,
- c) **Human Resources**: improve competencies of and support for human resources involved in research,
- d) **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,
- e) **Standards**: foster best practices and enhanced standards for research, and
- f) **Impact**: promote the dissemination and utilization of research findings.

6. ACHR commended PASB 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. In their view, this progress and approach continue to place PAHO at the forefront of important international developments in research for health.

### **Analysis**

7. The ACHR advisory services in the areas agreed upon will continue to:

- a) support leadership and progress in the Organization's research, including the development of monitoring and evaluation tools and of a strategy/plan of action on research for health to guide PASB and Member States in implementing the Policy (4);
- b) strengthen the production and use of research findings to improve health in the Region;
- c) strengthen management of research within the Organization, and
- d) support the progressive development of national health research systems that contribute to health and equity in the Member States.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2600&Itemid=2425&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2600&Itemid=2425&lang=en)

## Proposal

8. Participants stressed that PAHO needs to implement monitoring and evaluation, and consider a strategy/plan of action to support PAHO to better advance the implementation of the Policy on Research for Health in a consistent and equitable manner. There are well-defined tools, standards, and processes in place to enhance the governance of research for health and to scale up knowledge translation capacities in PAHO. These advances are an excellent opportunity to continue scaling up the integration of research into health policy, health care and technical support. Participants at the meeting voiced their views on the changes made to the focus of the World Health Report (3); a revised version of the report was published in 2013 (5).

## Action for the Executive Committee

9. The Executive Committee is invited to take note of this report and to provide any recommendations it deems necessary.

## Annexes

## References

1. Pan American Health Organization. Report of the PAHO/WHO advisory committee on health research [Internet]. 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference of PAHO, and 64th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2012 Sep 17-21; Washington (DC), US. Washington (DC): PAHO; 2012 (Document CSP28/INF/2) [cited 2014 Apr 29]. Available from: [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=18523&Itemid=&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=18523&Itemid=&lang=en)
2. Pan American Health Organization. [Pan American Health Organization Advisory Committee on health research: a historical review of its contributions to health, health care, and health policies 1964-2008](#) [Internet]. Washington (DC): PAHO; 2010 [cited 2014 Apr 15]. Available from: [www.paho.org/achr](http://www.paho.org/achr)
3. Pan American Health Organization. Report to the Director [Internet]. 45th Session of the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR) of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); 2012 Oct 17-19; Hamilton, ON (Canada). Washington (DC): PAHO; 2012. 38p. [cited 2014 Apr 15]. Available from: [www.paho.org/achr](http://www.paho.org/achr)
4. Pan American Health Organization. Policy on research for health [Internet]. 49th Directing Council of PAHO, 61st Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2009 Sep 28-Oct 2; Washington (DC), US. Washington (DC):

PAHO; 2009 (Resolution CD49.R10 and Document CD49/10) [cited 2014 Apr 15].

Available from:

<http://www2.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2009/CD49-R10-Eng.pdf>

<http://www2.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2009/CD49-10-e.pdf>

5. World Health Organization. The world health report 2013: research for universal health coverage [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2013. (ISBN 9789241564595) [cited 2014 Apr 15]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/whr/2013/report/en/>.

## Annex A

### **Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Health Research to the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, October 2012**

*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<sup>3</sup> 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.
6. Many ACHR recommendations address each of the goals and related objectives articulated in the PAHO Policy on Research for Health.

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

7. 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.

8. 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***

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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***

12. 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.

13. 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***

14. 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 ethno-cultural balance.

15. 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.

16. 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 PAHO/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***

17. 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).

18. 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.

19. 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***

20. 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.

21. 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*

22. 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.

23. 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.



**ANALYTICAL FORM TO LINK AGENDA ITEM WITH ORGANIZATIONAL MANDATES**

**1. Agenda item:** 7.4 – Report of the PAHO/WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research

**2. Responsible unit:** Knowledge Management, Bioethics, and Research (KBR)

**3. Preparing officer:** Dr. Luis Gabriel Cuervo

**4. List of collaborating centers and national institutions linked to this Agenda item:**

WHO Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy. Several other WHO Collaborating Centers and institutions are actively supporting the implementation of PAHO's Policy on Research for Health (Document CD49/10 of 2009) and related WHO and PAHO mandates.

**5. Link between Agenda item and Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2017:**

Research cuts across the elements of the Health Agenda for the Americas and specifically addressed under its item g, "Harnessing Knowledge, Science, and Technology".

**6. Link between Agenda item and the PAHO Strategic Plan 2014-2019:**

Research is an enabling function that spans across the work of the Organization, facilitating the achievement of the nine impact goals for the period 2014-2019. Research is a core function of the Organization: "Shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, dissemination, and application of valuable knowledge."

Research is listed in category IV of the Programmatic Plan Structure "strengthening health information and research systems and the integration of evidence into health policies and health care".

Research is also specifically addressed under the "strategies for technical cooperation" of the Strategic Plan.

**7. Best practices in this area and examples from countries within the Region of the Americas:**

WHO is working to set up an observatory to organize information and provide better indicators about the resources invested in research for health. PAHO and the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED) prepared "wiki" platforms for countries to share information about national health research systems.

Research for health is a worthy investment that can drive social and economic development and enable countries to find solutions to address their health and development problems. A number of recommendations have been made to increase investment levels to at least 2% of the budget of the

Ministries of Health in research, and to dedicate 5% of the combined core budget and voluntary contributions of organizations towards research for health and the implementation and evaluation of the Policy on Research for Health (including knowledge translation). Assessing progress on these recommendations requires the political will to develop and implement adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Such investment levels were recommended in Document CD49.10 (2009) and are consistent with other policies, calls to action, and recommendations from experts such as:

- 63rd World Health Assembly. WHO Strategy on Research for Health. Document A63/22 approved on May 21, 2010 with resolution A63.r21. Available at: [http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA63/A63\\_R21-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA63/A63_R21-en.pdf).
- Bamako Call to Action on Research for Health: Strengthening research for health, development and equity. Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health. Bamako, Mali, 17-19 November 2008. Available at <http://www.who.int/rpc/news/BAMAKOCALLTOACTIONFinalNov24.pdf>.
- Ministerial Summit on Research for Health: the Mexico Statement on Health Research. Knowledge for better health: strengthening health systems. Mexico, DF, 16 to 20 November, 2004. (Accessed 16 April 2014) Available at: [http://www.who.int/rpc/summit/agenda/Mexico\\_Statement-English.pdf](http://www.who.int/rpc/summit/agenda/Mexico_Statement-English.pdf).
- Commission on Health Research for Development. Health research:essential link to equity in development. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1990.

**8. Financial implications of this Agenda item:** Not applicable.

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