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A. Introduction

1.   The goal is to create a platform composed of a series of internet based tools that will support and promote innovation, access, rational use and good governance in the area of medicines, technologies and diagnostics with a public health perspective and to serve regional health priorities.

2.   The overall scope of the platform will be aligned with the priorities specified in the Health Agenda for the Americas and articulated in the Pan American Health Organization's (PAHO/WHO) strategic plan 2008-2012. In particular, the platform will cover the following topics:

- Access to essential medicines, health technologies and diagnostics
- Intellectual Property Management from a Public Health perspective
- R&D and technological innovation for health
- Rational use of medicines and health technologies and health technology assessment
- Pharmaceutical and technologies policies and regulations

3.   We understand a platform as a system that contains and supports many tools and bring all the components together. We envisioned the platform as a mechanism to:

a) Develop a participative and cooperative knowledge base
b) Share relevant resources and information
c) Ensure dissemination of trustworthy non-biased information
d) Facilitate brokering and cooperation
e) Catalyze horizontal project integration
f) Raise awareness about key issues and priorities
g) Facilitate technical cooperation

B. Conceptual framework and platform components

The Platform will be built by the integration of four main components:

a) Social networks
b) Information hub
c) Capacity development
d) Knowledge Repository & Transfer

4.   Additionally, the platform will also host an INNOVATION FORUM that will channel users' "problems" and "solutions" under an open innovation model.[1]

Social Networks

5.   We propose to develop the platform collaboratively based on participation and cooperation of all concerned parties; thus, the social network component is an essential element of this project.

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[1]. "Open Innovation allows many people from different disciplines to tackle the same problem simultaneously and not sequentially. Anyone can participate with collaborative technology and OI training. When many minds are working on the same problem, it will take less time to solve it" http://www2.innocentive.com/seekers/benefits-open-innovation

6. The platform will deal with a vast number of topics which require a cross-cutting approach to be accomplished effectively. Strengthening **networks** that can work horizontally and collaboratively sharing knowledge and expertise, connecting partners irrespectively of their geographical location and developing communities that can construct a participative knowledge base will help solve local and regional problems in a more efficient and sustainable manner. Moreover, we believe that in certain areas such as technological innovation, these virtual communities will be instrumental for the development of an open innovation model. It will allow the flow of ideas beyond the institutional and national boundaries and the expansion of partnerships that cooperate in the development of medicines and technologies to combat priority diseases. We expect that formation of **communities of practice**[2] and other such networks will promote multi-centered projects by breaking down the R&D processes among experts in different geographical locations. These communities will have a space within the platform to work, share and create together and take advantage of collaborative instruments such as wikis, virtual libraries, etc. Furthermore, social networks will facilitate the creation of an expert that will help locate experts and individuals working on a particular area or with particular interest. Eventually, the Platform will produce **linkages maps** from the data that results from the exchange of individuals inside the virtual space.

7. This element will also take advantage of other tools such as **blogs**[3] that allow disseminating information in an approachable and concise format. The thematic blogs can become user-friendly channels to reach a wide audience and keep it current on pressing and complex issues that might require regional attention. In all cases, the blog provides a two-way communication channel since it allows for an easy way of registering people reactions and opinions to the posted piece.

8. Lastly, we will incorporate and expand the **list-serves** to reach the intended audience effectively, **news announcements**, **surveys** and other web 2.0 tools.

Information hub

9. The platform should have a **data base** that helps monitor regional performance in the areas of access, innovation and rational use of essential medicines and technologies. Moreover, it will also collect data on **pharmaceutical and health technologies policies** in the Americas.

10. The data will be based on previously defined indicators for each area and will be aggregated by geographical context, topic, etc. The hub will facilitate establishing a relationship between these indicators and basic health indicators. It will be the source of information for producing and posting periodic reports on the subject of access,

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[2] Communities of Practice enable similarly minded interacting people to work towards generating and collaborating on knowledge and learning initiatives in a variety of ways, through a number of overlapping functions. "Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations" . Ben Ramalingam July 2006. ODI Tool kit http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/153.pdf

[3] A weblog (usually shortened to blog, but occasionally spelled web log or weblog) is a web-based publication consisting primarily of periodic articles, usually in reverse chronological order. Ref same as 1

innovation and pharmaceutical policies. These reports will be based on the analysis of the indicators and will try to define trends, monitor performance and changes in this area.

11.   Due to the complexity and technical expertise required for defining, collecting and standardizing these indicators together with the labor intensive maintenance of such database, we propose to partner with the technically recognized experts in this field for the development of this component. The Network on Science and Technology Indicators – Ibero-American and Inter-American – (RICYT), with the participation of all the American countries, Spain and Portugal, was created by the CYTED Program. The RICYT has been developing indicators for science, technology and innovation since 1995 and has first hand experience in creating and maintaining data bases such as the one propose here. The partnership with PAHO will provide the public health perspective require for this task and will certainly result in an efficient approach to develop the data hub. Undoubtedly, the consensus and collaboration of National Health authorities and other stakeholders will be essential for developing the indicators, measuring the outcomes and submitting the data periodically.

12.   It is expected that this component will grow progressively over time with information that will serve as input for decision making in the area of access and innovation. A regional **price bank**, information on **licensing and regulations** of priority medicines, **national drug formularies** and other key information regarding medicines and technologies in the region, will be reflected in the platform.

13.   In summary, the data hub will be a dynamic database where objective information based on predefined indicators on access, innovation for health, rational use of essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies will be collected and aggregated in a way that will help implement monitoring and evaluation strategies.

Skills Development

14.   Capacity building should be at the center of any technical cooperation strategy and public health promotion scheme; more so in an area of major complexity such as innovation for health. The platform will pay particular attention to strengthening capacities by promoting the development of on-site and virtual learning opportunities that can improve competencies within the scope of the platform. Virtual offerings will be articulated trough PAHO's Virtual Campus of Public Health, taking advantage of this well established tool and allowing for inter-programmatic integration. It will also disseminate external learning offerings that are considered within the standards and objectives of the project.

15.   Additionally, this component will host as a repository of the recordings of expert conferences and meetings. Many of these recordings are in itself sources of information and could enrich the knowledge and skills of platform's users.

Knowledge Repository & Transfer

16.   The knowledge repository and transfer component is expected to work as a foundation for developing the platform since it will attract high user participation and jump start the cooperative model that we proposed above.

It will have several spaces:

    a.   The thematic library:
In a traditional library format, this space will catalogue scientific and other relevant publications searchable by the appropriate tags. Additionally, it will catalog the body of pharmaceutical policies and regulations from member countries and update it periodically (see information hub section). Moreover it will provide access via web-links to other databases and libraries of interest such as the Virtual Health Library, the Clinical Trial Registry, etc.

    b.   The user-friendly summaries:
Providing a user-friendly summary of complex and technical involved information has been pointed as a critical facilitator to ensure that that information is used in interventions and policy development. We believe that the platform should not only be a source of non-biased, trustworthy information but that it should present the information in a format that will allow for easy access and utilization. There are two areas in which summaries of the best evidence available (in general, based on systematic reviews) will be of particular value: rational use of medicines and health technology evaluation. We proposed to develop a database of the best evidence on the rational use of a predefined list of essential medicines (the ones more relevant to the Region based on supply and disease burden). Additionally, it would be of interest to provide information on interventions and policies that can advance the rational use of medicines and thus improve health interventions outcomes and public health. Examples of such kind exist in English (http://www.cadth.ca/index.php/en/index.php/en/compus/optimal-ther-resources/interventions/) but to our knowledge, not in Spanish or Portuguese. Likewise, due to cost, bias and complexity, health technology assessment would be another area that we consider key when providing user-friendly information geared to the different stakeholders, from civil society to decision makers.

    c.   The   rapid   response   service:
To be developed at a later stage, it will be a resource provided only to national health authorities and selected public health institutions that will receive evidence based answers to questions related to medicines and technologies that cannot be easily obtained by searching the above mentioned databases. The scope and limits of this service should be carefully defined so as to provide an efficient service.
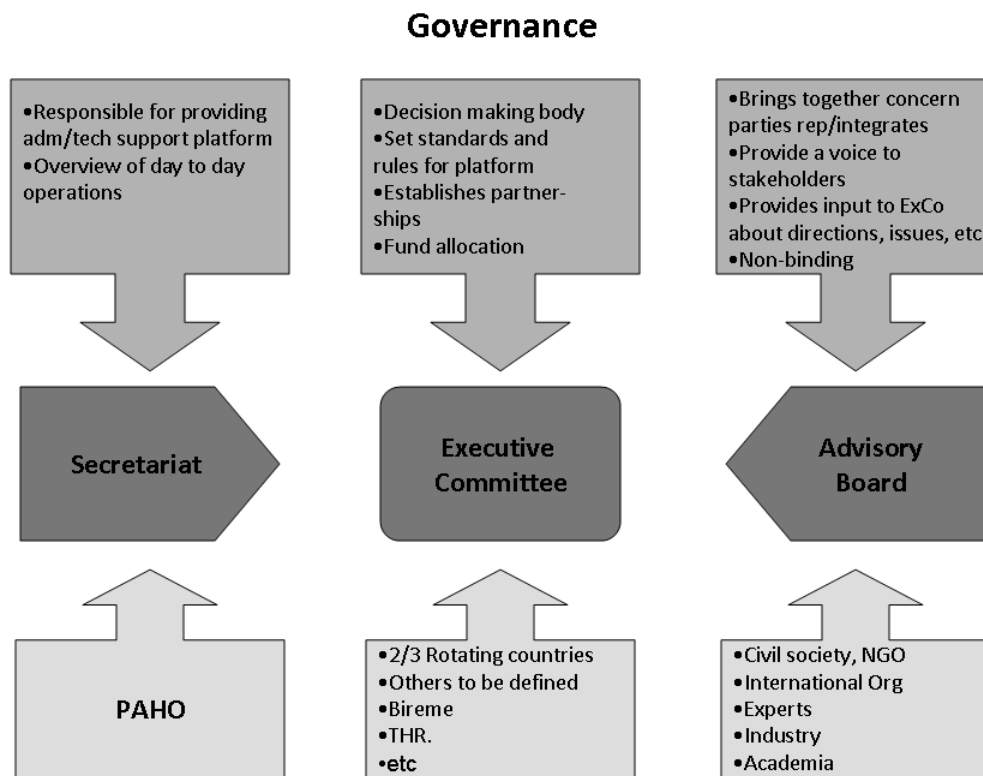
17.   Putting together evidence summaries involves a rigorous and complex processes that will require collaborating with experts and networks that can support these tasks. The Iberoamerican Cochrane Network, with whom PAHO has signed a memorandum of agreement to collaborate in such issues, represents an excellent choice to partner with for this task.

Innovation Forum

18.   The Innovation Forum will be a space where "seekers" and "solvers" would be able to meet to collaborate in a particular problem. The seekers could come from any of the platform's stakeholders: a researcher seeking collaboration to advance his/her project to the next level or a research institution or the industry looking to solve a specific issue or gain knowledge in a particular area. Moreover, PAHO or the Platform's governing structure as well as member countries science and innovation authorities would be able to launch specific calls or prizes using this media. An archive of seekers and users will eventually allow us to map actors and players in the innovation for health field.

C.   <u>Governance, Development and Stakeholders.</u>

The graphic below describes the proposed governance model for the platform

Governance

19.   This model will be coherent with a platform that will be constructed collaboratively under the standards and direction set by the executive committee and under PAHO administration. The stakeholders and/or concern parties that we hope will participate in the development and enrichment of the platform and will become active users of the different components include, among others:

- Member countries
- PAHO/WHO
- Other international Organizations
- Civil Society
- NGO
- Industry
- Academia
- Collaborating Centers

20.   After an internal consultation is performed, we propose to consult these stakeholders on about the proposed plan for the platform and enrich the project with their inputs and opinions.

D.   Expected Results

21.   We expect that overall the platform will:

a) Strengthen national health authorities in their regulatory and governance functions for the pharmaceutical and innovation for health sectors.
b) Promote access to essential medicines and health technologies and improve the rational use of these products best on the best evidence available
c) Promote innovation and technology transfer to serve Regional health priorities
d) Develop capacities that can facilitate the above mentioned objectives
e) Facilitate the exchange and transparency and information

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