

Bulletin #2: Health Economics Units or Departments of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.¹

The “Second Meeting of Health Economics Units/Departments of Public Health Institutions in Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean” was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on April 15-16th, 2009. This joint meeting was organized by the Secretariat of Social Determinants and Sanitary Relations of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Argentina and the Pan American Health Organization. Participants included representatives of health economics units/departments of the Region and of observer countries Cuba and Venezuela.

One of the main goals of the meeting was to foster an exchange of knowledge, ideas, and regional experiences among the health economics units/departments of the Region. Several key ideas discussed were aimed to: i) promote the exchange of information in regards to institutional aspects and current/future lines of work; ii) establish guidelines to develop a joint agenda at the regional level; iii) develop an institutional dialogue at both bilateral and multilateral levels; and lastly iv) define the criteria for the operation of a regional network.

Key conclusions and findings are outlined below under the general umbrella agreement, the proposal for common themes to develop, and the mechanisms for implementation.

General Umbrella Agreement

Representatives in attendance during the Second Meeting of Health Economics Units/Departments (April 2009) agreed to present before the Directing Council a proposal for the creation of a permanent Regional Forum on Health and Economic and Social Development. This proposal is to be prepared and presented by a Chilean delegation at the 144th Directing Council meeting to be held in September 2009.

The creation of a permanent Regional Forum on Health and Economic and Social Development would serve to strengthen the role of health as a key driver in the economic and social development of countries in the region. Such a forum would also bring awareness to the work performed by the health economics units/departments, while also promoting future lines of work to guarantee institutional continuity.

Proposal for Common Themes to Develop²

- 1) Studies on economic and financing issues of health care systems:
 - Financing of national health systems: fiscal implications of the financing of health systems.

¹ Prepared by the staff of Public Policies, Regulation, and Health Financing of the Area of Health Systems and Services of the Pan American Health Organization.

² Themes are to be developed between two or more countries in accordance with each units/departments interest.

- Payment mechanisms and the financing of health systems: economic analysis of health systems.
 - Public policies of market regulations of goods and services in the area of health, medicines, and critical supplies.
 - Joint studies on the price of medicines based on findings from the price of medicines and critical supplies database; also discussed at other regional fora.
 - Cost management studies.
- 2) Health Accounts: harmonization of public health expenditure statistics; accounts of the expenditure, financing, and distributive impact on public health systems; satellite health accounts.
 - 3) Studies on social determinants of health: specific themes to be developed.
 - 4) Current events:
 - The global financial crisis and the impact on health systems. Case studies.

Implementation Mechanisms

- 1) The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) will prepare a list of possible common themes to be developed between the health economics units/departments of participating countries—this is derived from the existing work plans of each unit/department. In addition, PAHO will identify mechanisms for bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral cooperation in the development of themes to be financed by the Special Funds to foster technical cooperation between countries (TCC Funds).
- 2) Update and redesign of web page with contributions from participating units/departments to include:
 - Page on countries' health systems profiles similar to the "Snapshots of Health Systems" found on the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies website.³
 - Topics on economics and financing of health as found in the Virtual Health Library (BIREME).⁴
 - Updated version of the electronic bulletin of the health economics units/departments.
- 3) Explore the option of future human resources capacity building programs in the area of health economics.
- 4) Coordinate the development of a database on the price of medicines and critical supplies in the Region; and promote research with the health economics units/departments to formulate and monitor the public policies of medicine regulations and critical supplies.

Updates to the First Bulletin (November 2008)

Table 1 shows an updated list of work themes for the health economics units/departments that participated in the Second Meeting. Table 2 is a directory of health economics units/departments in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

³ Website of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies: [Snapshots of Health Systems](#).

⁴ Virtual Health Library: [Virtual Health Library](#)