

**EB120.R15 WHO's role and responsibilities in health research**

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on WHO's role and responsibilities in health research,<sup>1</sup>

RECOMMENDS to the Sixtieth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:<sup>2</sup>

The Sixtieth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolution WHA58.34 on the Ministerial Summit on Health Research;

Having considered the report on WHO's role and responsibilities in health research;

Acknowledging the critical role of the entire spectrum of health and medical research in improving human health;

Recognizing that research into poverty and inequity in health is limited, and that the ensuing evidence is important to guide policy in order to minimize gaps;

Reaffirming that research to strengthen health systems is fundamental for achieving internationally agreed health-related development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;

Recognizing that a wide gap exists between developed and developing countries in the capacity for health research, that it may hamper efforts to achieve better health results, and that it may contribute to worsening the brain drain;

Noting in particular the work of IARC, the WHO Centre for Health Development, the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, and the UNDP/UNFPA/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction;

Convinced that research findings and data derived from effective health-information systems should be used to inform decisions about the delivery of interventions to those who need them most;

Mindful that the Organization should lead by example in the use of research findings to inform decisions about health;

Reaffirming the role of WHO's cosponsored research programmes in support of neglected areas of research relevant to poor and disadvantaged populations, particularly poverty-related diseases, tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS, and recognizing the contributions of WHO to strengthening research capacity;

Committed to ensuring ethical standards in the conduct of health research supported by the Organization,

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<sup>1</sup> Document EB120/14.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 6 for the financial and administrative implications for the Secretariat of this resolution.

1. URGES Member States:

- (1) to consider implementing the recommendation made by the Commission on Health Research for Development in 1990 that “developing countries should invest at least 2% of national health expenditures in research and research capacity strengthening, and at least 5% of project and programme aid for the health sector from development aid agencies should be earmarked for research and research capacity strengthening”;<sup>1</sup>
- (2) to consider the development and strengthening of resource-tracking tools in order to monitor expenditure on health research from government and donor sources, and to disseminate relevant research findings to policy-makers, civil-society entities and the general public;
- (3) to integrate research in the mainstream of national programme activities and plans, and to promote wider access to research findings;
- (4) to strengthen the capacity of national and institutional ethics committees that review health-research proposals, as appropriate;
- (5) to draw up or strengthen health-research policies and health-research legislative documents, as appropriate;
- (6) to create a sustained training programme for research managers and to facilitate a cadre of trained professionals to manage health research, where necessary;
- (7) to improve the career management of researchers who do not necessarily come under the authority of the ministry responsible for research, as appropriate;
- (8) to consider strengthening national research capacities in the following complementary areas: generation of new knowledge, human and financial resources, research institutes and use of research findings in policy decisions, and to foster national and international networks for research collaboration;
- (9) to develop and strengthen a participatory mechanism, as appropriate, for all stakeholders in order to prioritize the health-research agenda on the basis of dynamic changes in health systems, disease burden, and emerging health-related issues.

2. CALLS UPON the health-research community, other international organizations, the private sector, civil society and other concerned stakeholders to provide strong, sustained support to research activities across the entire spectrum of health, medical and behavioural research, especially research into communicable diseases and poverty and inequity in health, with the participation of communities and in keeping with national priorities, and to maintain support of activities that promote the use of research findings to inform policy, practice and public opinion;

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<sup>1</sup> In *Commission on Health Research for Development. Health research: essential link to equity in development*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1990.

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to promote and advocate research in neglected areas of importance for better health, in particular on diseases that disproportionately affect developing countries and for poor and disadvantaged groups;
- (2) to strengthen the culture of research for evidence-based decision-making in the Organization and to ensure that research informs its technical activities;
- (3) to develop a reporting system on WHO's activities in health research;
- (4) to improve significantly coordination of relevant research activities, including integration of research into disease control and prevention, and designate one focal point within the Organization who has the overview of all WHO's research activities;
- (5) to review the use of research evidence for major policy decisions and recommendations within WHO;
- (6) to establish transparent mechanisms for prioritization of research activities and projects within WHO, including independent peer-review mechanisms, and selection criteria such as relevance and scientific quality;
- (7) to establish standard procedures and mechanisms for the conduct of research and use of findings by the Organization, including registration of research proposals in a publicly accessible database, peer review of proposals, and dissemination of findings;
- (8) to advise Member States, when requested, on ways to organize systems for research for better health;
- (9) to promote better access to relevant research findings, including by supporting the movement towards open access to scientific journals;
- (10) to provide support to Member States in order to develop capacities for health-systems and health-policy research, where necessary;
- (11) to provide technical support to Member States for strengthening the capacity of national and institutional health-research ethics committees, reviewing complex research protocols, and drafting national health policies and health-research legislative documents;
- (12) to identify and implement mechanisms to provide better support to countries and regions in recognizing and maximizing health research as a key factor in the development of health systems, in particular in developing countries;
- (13) to formulate simple priority-setting strategies for health research for use by national governments, where appropriate;
- (14) to institute appropriate systems and mechanisms for greater interaction and convergence among researchers and users of relevant research in order to improve use of research findings and to enhance framing of health policy;
- (15) to provide capacity-building opportunities in health economics, assessment of health technology, economic impact of disease, and costing of various interventions in order for a country to optimize its health-system delivery;

(16) to build up capacity in order to monitor and report to Member States on total expenditure on health research by country and region, by public and donor sources, and by type of expenditure;

(17) to submit to the Sixty-second World Health Assembly a strategy for the management and organization of research activities within WHO.

(Twelfth meeting, 29 January 2007)