



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD
117th Session
Provisional agenda item 9.4

EB117/37
9 January 2006

Report of the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR)

Report by the Secretariat

1. This document provides a brief summary of the deliberations of ACHR at its forty-fifth session (Geneva, 7-9 November, 2005).¹
2. All Chairs of regional advisory committees are now considered as ex-officio members of the global ACHR.
3. In reviewing the implementation of initiatives following the Ministerial Summit on Health Research (Mexico City, 16-20 November 2004), the Committee urged a much clearer focus and articulation of outcomes for the planned **partnership programme on health systems research**.
4. Disclosure of clinical trials data is relevant to global public health and the Committee expressed its satisfaction at the progress made in establishing a **platform to link international clinical trials registers**. It strongly supports transparent and non-selective disclosure of such data and the improvement of links between registration of trials and ethical review. It also encouraged the inclusion of non-English-speaking members in the international advisory board and scientific advisory group that will govern and guide the project.
5. The Committee strongly supported the **Evidence-informed Policy Networks** initiative and considered the engagement of ministers and other policy-makers to be essential for increasing the demand for health-systems research. Links should be established with the Health Evidence Network set up by the Regional Office for Europe and other existing networks.
6. Progress was reported on the work of **ACHR's Subcommittee on Better Use of Research Evidence in WHO**. The Committee endorsed the recommendations arising from the programme of work overseen by the subcommittee and supported a proposal that the Secretariat should consider establishing in-house mechanisms whereby proposed guidelines are submitted to an internal body for review and oversight analogous to the WHO Research Ethics Review Committee.
7. Following a presentation on the **survey**, sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency, of **WHO's research activities** the Committee expressed broad support for the recommendations made on the basis of the survey but was dissatisfied at the low response rate (49%).

¹ Full report is available on request.

The Committee repeated calls made in previous years for more effective management mechanisms within the Secretariat to ensure the quality, relevance and dissemination of research and that it should create a database or information system for research activities as a high priority.

8. Following extensive discussion of the position paper on **WHO's role and responsibilities in health research**,¹ the Committee concluded that the paper should recognize ACHR's overview function for health research within WHO, emphasize the importance of health-systems research, and acknowledge that research functions may differ at different levels of the Organization. It also urged greater clarity about where the responsibility lies for taking the actions set out in the position paper.

9. Information was provided on the planning of the next **ministerial conference on research for health** to be held in Africa in 2008. The Committee expressed its desire to be involved in drawing up the programme and drafting key messages. It also urged definition of a clear focus, early engagement with countries, building on what was achieved at the Mexico Summit, review of progress in implementing resolutions, and involvement of the donors concerned in supporting health research.

10. The Committee acknowledged that many current **research contracts** between external donors and developing country institutions put the latter at a disadvantage. Members strongly supported the idea that the Secretariat should play a role in drawing up model contracts and codes of good practice for sponsors of research.

11. The work of the **Subcommittee on Research Needs in Emergency Response** was acknowledged. ACHR encouraged more follow-up activities in the future, perhaps in collaboration with the Regional Office for South-East Asia, the region worst affected by the earthquake and tsunami of December 2004.

12. Information was also provided to the Committee on several other issues related to health research, including the links between health and agriculture, activities of the WHO Centre for Health Development (Kobe, Japan), the Secretariat's work on bioethics, and preparation of research agendas for the World Alliance for Patient Safety and on human resources for health.

13. The Committee agreed on its workplan for 2006-2007.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

14. The Board is invited to note the report.

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¹ See document EB117/14.