

Reports of advisory bodies

Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR)

Report by the Secretariat

1. This document provides a summary of the deliberations of ACHR at its forty-seventh session (Geneva, 4–6 June, 2007).¹
2. All chairs of regional advisory committees are henceforth considered ex officio members of the global ACHR. The Committee emphasized its desire more closely to coordinate and harmonize the activities of the global and regional ACHRs.
3. As requested by the Health Assembly in resolution WHA60.15 adopted in May 2007, a progress report on the development of the **WHO health research strategy** was submitted. Provisional guiding principles had been articulated as the main axes of the strategy, and a consultative group internal to WHO and an external reference group had been convened to guide the process. An extensive consultation process, covering all WHO regional offices, is planned. The Committee wanted to be closely involved in drawing up the strategy, in finalizing it for submission to the Sixty-second World Health Assembly and in planning both its implementation and monitoring.
4. After reviewing the plans for the **Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health** (Bamako, 17–19 November 2008), the Committee strongly urged greater clarity regarding the focus, objectives and expected outcomes. The Committee wished to be involved in drawing up the programme and drafting key messages.² It also urged the Secretariat's early engagement with countries, in order to build on what was achieved at the Ministerial Summit on Health Research (Mexico City, 16–20 November 2004); a review of progress in implementing Summit resolutions; and a review of involvement of those donors supporting health research.
5. Disclosure of data from clinical trials is relevant to global public health. The Committee expressed its satisfaction at progress made towards setting up the **International Clinical Trials Registry Platform**, including the launch of the global search portal and the announcement of the first primary registers involved in the Platform. It strongly supported transparent and non-selective disclosure of clinical trials data as well as improved links between registration of trials and ethical review. It also encouraged the development of a unique trial registration number and inclusion of the results of trials in the Platform in future.

¹ Full report is available on request.

² See document EB117/37.

6. The Committee continued to support strongly the **Evidence-informed Policy Networks** initiative. It was encouraged by the excellent progress made in extending the Networks to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, in establishing governance mechanisms, in setting up strong working relationships with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research and other research-to-policy networks, and in planning for monitoring and evaluation.

7. Progress was reported on the work of ACHR's **Subcommittee on Better Use of Research Evidence in WHO**. Terms of reference, membership, timelines and a preliminary workplan were drawn up for establishing a guidelines review committee. ACHR's advice was sought in respect of potential external members of the review committee.

8. The Committee acknowledged that many current research contracts between external donors or developed country institutions on the one hand, and developing country institutions on the other, put the latter at a disadvantage. A subcommittee has been formed to look into this matter and ACHR 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.

9. Continued good progress in the work of the **WHO Research Ethics Review Committee** was acknowledged, and its focus on ensuring efficient processes, maintaining up-to-date databases of proposals, conducting training workshops for members, strengthening regional office capacities and developing on-line training courses was deemed appropriate.

10. The work of the **Subcommittee on Research Needs in Emergency Response** was acknowledged. ACHR encouraged continued follow-up activities, perhaps with some of the country teams involved in **Evidence-informed Policy Networks** with an interest in this area, and with the Regional Office for South-East Asia (the region worst affected by the earthquake and tsunami of December 2004).

11. The Committee also considered information on other areas related to: health research, including a reporting system for research in WHO; the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property; ownership of bio-resources, the research agenda of the World Alliance for Patient Safety; dual use of research; and the International Association of National Public Health Institutes.

12. The Committee agreed on the workplan for 2007–2008.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

13. The Board is invited to note the report.

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