

WHO/PLoS Collection: No Health Without Research - A Call for Papers

A call for papers for a joint WHO/PLoS collection on the theme of the 2012 World Health Report on Research for Health.

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“.....It seems astonishing that in the 21st century decisions on health care can still be made without a solid grounding in research evidence. This is true even in clinical research, whether for simple or complex interventions [1], where systematic reviews time and time again conclude that the evidence base is inadequate [2]. It is even more true in the areas of health policy and health systems, where quality research is hampered further by a lack of shared definitions, a lack of consensus on guiding principles, poor capacity (especially in low-resource regions), and methodological challenges [3],[4].

The World Health Report (WHR) for 2012 will be on the theme of “No Health without Research”.

This flagship report from WHO will, for the first time in its history, focus on research for better health. The primary target audience of the report will be ministers of health in the WHO member states, and the goal of the report is to provide new ideas, innovative thinking, and pragmatic advice for member states on how to strengthen their own health research systems.

The report will have the three following aims.

- To show that research is important for meeting health needs and improving health outcomes;
- To encourage countries to therefore invest more resources in developing and strengthening their national health research systems;
- To argue that countries should not see research as an expense or as an afterthought, but as an investment for a better, healthier future.

The WHR 2012 aims to provide impetus for a change to the problematic state of affairs of health research. Given the stated goals of the report, of particular importance is the documentation and sharing of real experiences from the countries where the research has been done. We therefore wish to invite the submission of articles, especially from low- and middle-income countries, on topics related to the strengthening of key functions and components of national health research systems [5].

We would then aim to publish a WHO/PLoS Collection culminating in 2012 to coincide with the release of the WHR. Thus, we welcome examples of research and/or case studies in the following areas.

- Experience with setting and implementing health research priorities;
- Experience with building, strengthening, and retaining research capacity, at both the individual and institutional levels;
- National research and development initiatives and experiences to produce needed medical products, including development of national pharmaceutical production capabilities, using TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) flexibilities for essential medicines, technology transfer, - Examples of appropriate use of evidence in health policy development;
- Models of how to organize research within a country, including the establishment of effective research networks and sustainable governance mechanisms;

- Standards and mechanisms to ensure the responsible conduct of research (e.g., ethics review, access to research results, codes of conduct, etc.);
- Exercises to evaluate the impact of research investments;
- Experiences with external foreign aid for research.

Ideally, studies or reports should not be merely descriptions of activities but should include evaluation of the impact of initiatives after their implementation. Special consideration will also be given to systematic and well-performed multi-country comparative studies on the topics mentioned above, including systematic reviews, in selected topic areas.

In addition to primary research (both quantitative and qualitative) and well-developed case studies, we also invite the submission of review and policy articles on how national health research systems contribute to the broader international research endeavor, especially in the context of the following areas.

- Global health research governance;
- Inequitable access to the benefits and products of research;
- Global standards for responsible research conduct;
- Future research trends with implications for the developing world.

All papers should be submitted to PLoS Medicine, noting that they are intended for this collection. An initial decision will be made about their potential suitability for either PLoS Medicine or another PLoS journal. The authors will be informed of this decision and papers will be peer-reviewed according to the specific journal's policies. PLoS will retain all control over editorial decisions. Once a paper is accepted for publication in a PLoS journal it will then be forwarded to the selection panel for the collection.

This panel, which will comprise PLoS and WHO staff, will decide on the articles for inclusion in the collection. Further information on this process is available at the collections page <http://bit.ly/feLC85> .