

## **NETWORK OF CENTERS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, PHC**

### **SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS OF THE MEETING**

Held in Belo Horizonte, December 11 - 13, 2007

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The meeting reviewed evidence of the importance of PHC today and presented some of the main regional collaborations providing evidence on the impact of the PHC approach on health and equity.

#### **Consensus: To build and promote Research on PHC is a necessity**

- The development of health systems based on PHC requires a sustained political commitment.
- Research can improve the profile, standing, and practice of PHC, and the satisfaction of PHC providers.

#### **How to strengthen PHC?**

- ✓ There are some important aspects to consider such as leadership, political will, knowledge, and public health, using research as an important input for decision-making processes aimed at change.
- ✓ Evidence, applied research, and advocacy are necessary to demonstrate that PHC is the road that health systems should follow.
- ✓ Usually primary care teams work in isolation from the rest of the system and the creation of a network represents an important support to their performance and work.

#### **Requirements for Research**

- ✓ Research requires infrastructure, through associations or professional trade organizations, publications, trainings, and support for research teams, in trying to maintain independence and autonomy for their professionals. ?
- ✓ Within the Region resources are limited and there are great differences among countries. Commonly there are many difficulties/barriers to conduct studies on social aspects of health and human resources effectiveness.

#### **Problems to be addressed in PHC Research**

- ✓ Researchers tends to not consider the needs of developing countries, thus the countries with greater needs tend to be excluded from studies.
- ✓ There is an extensive lack of economic and technical support to develop research.
- ✓ The scientific output in PHC is low and not always is focused on decision makers and the policymaking process. Although policy makers need evidence to make budget ? decisions, there are no resources to generate that evidence.
- ✓ Communication between researchers and policy makers is poor.
- ✓ There is some evidence for some populations, but surprisingly little is published evidence. This is a serious shortcoming that must be addressed urgently.
- ✓ We must do better in providing the right evidence that is rigorous, relevant, and responsive to population, provider, and policymakers needs.
- ✓ PHC is not a priority on the political agenda, there is no will and no resources.

### **Primary Health Care v/s Primary Care**

- ✓ *Primary Health Care* is a population strategy requiring the commitment of governments to address the wide variety of influences on health and to meet the health-related needs of populations through primary care services strongly coordinated with other levels and services. PHC is a population strategy, it should cope population's needs.
- ✓ *Primary care* is the provision of first contact, person-focused ongoing care over time that meets the health-related needs of people, referring only those too uncommon to provide the best care that patient needs, and coordinates care when people receive services at other levels of care.

### **Why create a Network?**

- ✓ Networks are important because they promote and gather good ideas, take the best practices and promote them, find different ways to better achieve what is needed, create platforms, disseminate and publish results.
- ✓ It is known that there is a need for knowledge at the local level.

### **What a Network should look like?**

- ✓ A framework needs to be developed to create a network.
- ✓ It should be based on collaborative work considering a commitment to equity, population needs, and ethical values.

### **Questions to be answered:**

- How should the network be structured?
- Who should lead it: PAHO, others Centers, governments?
- Should it be a formal or informal network?
- Should it be opened to others actors?
- Who are the potential partners?
- What about funds?
- What should be the resources for different subjects such as meetings or others specific subjects?
- The network needs an information flow system, nodes, and programs. What type of nodes will there be? Institutions? Individuals? Established working groups or new ones?
- The expected result should be to share knowledge of good practices, or to set a core advocacy group making pressure through knowledge?

### **First Steps Considerations**

- ✓ Should we use the knowledge that we already have, or start from scratch instead?
- ✓ How can we standardize the criteria (effective networks) to bring welfare and better health to such different countries?
- ✓ How can we design better procedures in order to make practical (operational?) research more suitable and acceptable?
- ✓ How can we change clinical training programs to be more flexible and make room for PHC education?

- ✓ The creation of this network will depend significantly on financial resources.
- ✓ The dissemination strategies should be wide-spectrum; there is a need to set common criteria in order to go beyond the borders of academia.
- ✓ There should be a movement to identify centers of excellence.
- ✓ What kind of leadership will our network need?

### **Potential Subjects for Research**

Due to the difference among the countries there are varied problems to take into account, although some of them are common to all such as the integration of PHC to the system as a whole. Other topics to be considered are coordination, communication at different levels and within PHC. This kind of initiative represents a new momentum.

### **Objectives of the network**

This network intends to produce, present and disseminate evidence on health systems based on PHC. There is strong evidence that a network could be useful for this purpose. Also there is some evidence that it is necessary to generate more evidence from the local context within the countries. However, quality of research does not mean impact from its application and results.

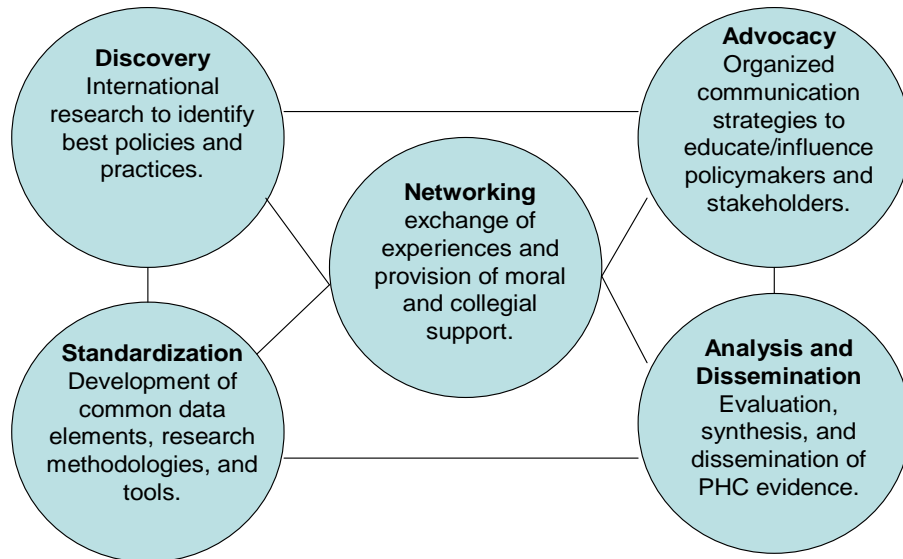
A powerful network can be an important element to move forward the public agenda. The network should be articulated with other organisms at different levels trying to build knowledge and consensus.

There is no intention to solve all the problems and deficits within the countries but it will be an important and productive space to discuss, share and exchange different practices and experiences in order to take advantage of all the valuable knowledge that exists in each country.

### **Functions of the networks**

- ✓ To mobilize funds for research on Primary Health Care (PHC)
- ✓ To conduct better and more rigorous research
- ✓ To make the research more comparable and more able to influence policy decisions
- ✓ To collaborate across the boundaries of countries
- ✓ To share results and tools

# Functions of the Network of Centers for Primary Health Care Excellence



Source: James Macinko

## Agreements:

- Ministry of Health - Brazil will contribute with funds and infrastructure
- Canada can assist in distribution of the proposal among potential funders
- Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública is willing to contribute through the agreement set with PAHO
- PAHO will circulate a proposal and include the participants' suggestions
- There is an opportunity to present this initiative during the Canadian Conference on International Health to be held in October 2008. During that meeting the group would hold a specific meeting (participants to be determined, dependent on funds)