Editorial

HEALTH RESEARCH

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In this editorial, we go back to the subject of health research in view of the goals established by the United Nations - UN for the millennium and by the National Health Policy adopted in the country.

In Brazil, the National Health Science, Technology and Innovation Policy is part of the National Health Policy that is formulated in the context of the Single Health System – SUS, based on three fundamental principles: universality, comprehensiveness and equity. From the perspective of science and technology, the application of these principles should correspond to the political and ethical commitment to the production and adaptation of knowledge and technologies that contribute to the reduction of social inequalities in health[1].

The increase in scientific and technological health research development has been both a subject and an object of increasing importance in the country. Two National Health Science, Technology and Innovation Conferences, held in 1994 and 2004, were landmarks in the growing debate on health research and its relation with the adopted health policies, thus providing an actual contribution to the formulation of new guidelines[2].

A significant part of scientific and technological development data surveys in Brazil adopts the rule that the only actual health research is the sum of clinical, biomedical and public health research activities. This way of conceptualizing health research, based on knowledge areas and not on practical application sectors, does not consider research accomplished in areas related to human, exact, earth, agricultural, engineering and applied social sciences. Moreover, this approach includes research whose knowledge areas are biological sciences, which are not always directly related to human health[1].

Thus, a new guideline was established towards the development of research that attends to the population's health needs and whose main aims are to develop and optimize the scientific and technological knowledge production and absorption processes by health systems, services and institutions; human resource formation centers; production companies and other social segments.

These guidelines are in accordance with the international goals the UNO established for the millennium and represent a huge challenge for developing countries, since they will have to organize research systems based on health systems and make sure that the research results are incorporated into health policies and actions[3].

The UNO established eight millennium development goals, with 18 targets and 48 indicators to be reached by 2015. These goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; provide universal access to primary education; promote gender equality; reduce infant mortality; improve maternal health; fight against AIDS, malaria and other diseases; promote environmental sustainability; develop partnerships for development[4].

Reaching these goals will not be an easy task. However, it is both essential and urgent to develop and research on new or better interventions and their incorporation into health policies and actions, without which it will be hard to reach the goals and objectives. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the health research system, since solutions must result from the local realities themselves. Therefore, the research system in Brazil has to take into account the development level and current stage in epidemiological and demographic transitions; the continental dimensions and their priorities; the epidemiological profiles and tendencies of different diseases and health conditions, the cost – effectiveness of available interventions and the current level of basic/applied knowledge for each disease/health condition; the deficits in the current disease/health condition control processes and the knowledge gaps that have to be filled in order to conquer them; information needed to establish priorities in research activities; the relations between the priorities and the global research and control priorities; the – national, international and multinational - public, philanthropic and private current and desirable levels of participation in the planning, funding, execution and evaluation of health research, considering the macroeconomic aspects of different research, science and technology funding models; the national intellectual property policy and the international agreements Brazil has signed[3].

We agree with the opinion that "Brazil has a strong industrial park and a vigorous scientific community and has the capacity to develop a health research system that is capable of contributing to the achievement of the UN's goals"[3], and also with the fact that there exists evidence that the

principles guiding the millennium goals have been incorporated into health policies and actions[5]; however, what the country needs is a more efficient organization to achieve this goal.

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