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### **Health Research in Latin America**

Anastasia Moloney (Sept 26, p 1053)<sup>1</sup> identifies gaps and weaknesses in Latin America's health research, and indicates that integrated systems will help boost the amount and quality of health research produced in the region. We would like to highlight some recent developments, stimulated by the first Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health<sup>2</sup> in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in April, 2008.

Since Rio, regional agreements<sup>3</sup> and policies have been developed, and several countries have advanced the development of their research agendas and strengthened their capacities. For example: Paraguay is working towards a formal health research system; El Salvador has included a section on health research in its national health policy; Guatemala has established a coordinating office for health research within the Ministry of Health; and Uruguay has announced the launch of a sectoral fund for health research.

Other countries are implementing strategies that strengthen coordination and communication, and are sharing and learning from each other's experience.<sup>4</sup> These topics, and advances since the conference in Rio, were reviewed in a meeting on Nov 15–16, 2009, in Havana, Cuba.

The Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED), and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) are collaborating to support the strengthening of national health research systems in the region. The 49th Directing Council of PAHO approved on Sept 30, 2009, the PAHO Policy on Research for Health.<sup>5</sup> The approval of this policy re-emphasises the need for a systems focus for research development in the region, and shows commitment by health authorities to providing adequate governance and stewardship. The political support provided by PAHO and its Directing Council (in which all Member States are represented) will further help advance research in the region.

Furthermore, COHRED and PAHO are working with countries in the region to use management and benchmarking tools such as Health Research Web to provide access to information and to facilitate exchange on national systems for health research.

[For Health Research Web see <http://www.healthresearchweb.org>]

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We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

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**References:**

<sup>1</sup> Moloney A. Latin America faces hurdles in health research. *Lancet* 2009; 374: 1053–54.

<sup>2</sup> 1st Latin American Conference on research and innovation for health: conference report results and documents. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, April 15–18, 2008. [http://www.cohred.org/sites/default/files/Rio\\_report\\_EN\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.cohred.org/sites/default/files/Rio_report_EN_low_res.pdf) (accessed Dec 6, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Pan American Health Organization. Public health, innovation and intellectual property: a Regional perspective. October, 2008. <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/cd/cd48.r15e.pdf> (accessed Dec 6, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> EVIPNet Americas Secretariat. EVIPNet Americas: informing policies with evidence. *Lancet* 2008; 372: 1130–31.

<sup>5</sup> Pan American Health Organization. Directing Council (September 2009) unanimously approves PAHO's Policy on Research for Health. <http://www.paho.org/ResearchPortal/Policy> (accessed Dec 6, 2009).