



**NATIONAL UNIFIED HEALTH
RESEARCH AGENDA**

Funding Priorities 2009-2010

**Philippine National Health
Research System**

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NATIONAL UNIFIED HEALTH RESEARCH AGENDA

FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR
2009-2010

What is the PNHRS?

- *Is part of a global movement, which was advocated by the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED) to establish national health research systems in country settings*
- *Is a framework anchored on the principles of essential national health research on inclusiveness, participation, quality, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness*
- *Envisions a vibrant, dynamic, and responsible health research community working for the attainment of national and global goal*
- *Promotes and enhances cooperation between and among organizations and networks to:*
 - *share and pool resources*
 - *develop capacities for knowledge production, use and management*
 - *avoid duplication*
 - *deliver solutions with greater impact to the pressing health problems in the country.*

What are the goals of the PNHRS?

- *Ensure that health research is linked to the country's health needs;*
- *Ensure that investments in health research yield the most benefits;*
and
- *Foster high-performing and ethical health research organizations.*

Who are involved in the PNHRS?

- *All stakeholders within the health sector as well as the other sectors of society*
- *Key organizations leading the PNHRS are the:*
 - *Department of Science and Technology (DOST) through the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development*
 - *Department of Health (DOH)*
 - *Commission on Higher Education (CHED)*
 - *UP Manila National Institutes of Health (UPM-NIH)*

PREFACE

The National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA) is one of the major documents produced by the Philippine National Health Research System (PNHRS). The NUHRA provides the focus in health research and development efforts that address the country's health concerns/needs. It also forms the basis in maximizing resource utilization among stakeholders and minimizing duplication of research efforts.

This document embodies the short listed research priority topics from the updated NUHRA 2008-2010 to which funding assistance will be provided for 2009-2010. We are grateful to the Department of Health, the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development – Department of Science and Technology, and the Commission on Higher Education for their commitment and support in the implementation of the NUHRA.

Research is crucial in generating knowledge and technologies vital to improving the quality of health care and its delivery for improved health outcomes. We therefore call on you to join us, let us support the NUHRA!

RESEARCH AGENDA COMMITTEE
(formerly Research Management Committee)
Philippine National Health Research System

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is health research?

- It is the generation of new knowledge (biomedical, clinical, social) to identify and deal with health problems, health systems and policies as well as those that impact on health such as socioeconomic, environment, energy, and agricultural policies (PNHRS TWG Chairs, February 2004)

What is the NUHRA?

- The NUHRA is the National Unified Health Research Agenda.
- The NUHRA is a major document produced by the Research Agenda Committee (formerly Research Management Committee) for the Philippine National Health Research System (PNHRS) to ensure that health research efforts are sensitive, responsive and proactive to the country's health needs.
- It serves as the country's template for health research and development efforts that specifies the areas and topics that need to be addressed for 2006-2010.
- The NUHRA 2006-2010 was launched in 2006 and then updated in 2008.

What is the purpose of the NUHRA?

- It sets research directions and areas where policy makers, funding and donor agencies and researchers from public and private sectors including academe should invest to:
 - enhance the health, environment, labor and social services sectors;
 - ensure the health and productivity of the country's citizenry; and
 - contribute to national development.
- It responds to current and emerging health related concerns of the country through researches that:
 - support the country's commitments to the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in reducing maternal mortality ratio, infant mortality rates and malnutrition;
 - develop and provide access to cheaper, safe and effective medicines;
 - improve systems of health governance;
 - put in place a more efficient delivery of health services;
 - ensure prompt and appropriate response to national emergencies;
 - promote global competitiveness particularly in the application of advanced technologies;
 - support alleviation of poverty and suffering;
 - ensure a better, safe and healthy environment; and
 - promote a better life for the citizenry.
- It serves as basis to maximize resource utilization and minimize duplication of efforts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How was the NUHRA arrived at?

- It was drawn from a series of regional and national consultations involving representations from the government, academe, research institutions, professional organizations, non-government agencies, civil society, and funding agencies.
- It was based on national initiatives like the MDGs, MTPDP, Fourmula One for Health Framework for Health Reform and the National Science and Technology Plan.
- It is updated periodically to provide focus on priority research areas based on new developments or in line with thrusts of the incumbent administration.

What are the research priorities in the NUHRA?

The NUHRA is classified into seven major areas namely –

- **Health financing**, to find ways for the optimal mobilization of financial resources for health care and ensuring that every citizen has access to effective public health and personal health care;
- **Health governance**, for improving health system's performance and capacities in managing the health sector in addressing the health needs of the population;
- **Health regulation**, to ensure access to quality, effective, safe and affordable health care products, devices, facilities and services;
- **Health service delivery**, for improving the accessibility and availability of basic and essential health care for all, particularly for the poor, in both public and private facilities and services;
- **Health technology development**, in support of health services delivery through generation of safe, appropriate, and accessible technologies to address urgent health needs and likewise support the growth of small and medium scale entrepreneurs on health bioindustry;
- **Health research ethics**, for ensuring that health research accounts for Filipino culture, norms and traditions and assessing the practice of ethics in health research; and
- **Health information system**, on forming a functional and effective information system for relevant and quality information to support evidence based activities like health planning, decision-making, policy formulation and conduct of researches.

Under each of these classifications are a number of priority topics for research, the results of which will facilitate the improvement of health care services and delivery.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

For 2009-2010, PNHRS will provide research grants for the following short listed priority topics in the updated NUHRA :

HEALTH CARE FINANCING

Feasibility study on the implementation of the drug price reference index and diagnosis related groups (DRGs)

Propose for equitable and cost-efficient drug price indices to fully institute the Cheaper Medicine Law or simulate workable models to institute capitation schemes to support DRGs. Priority areas or focus can be for any type of communicable and non-communicable diseases, or at different levels of health service delivery or facility

Benefit incidence analysis: Health program funds flow and utilization

Determine health program expenditures and its impact on the poor. Employ an exhaustive research method focusing on access and equity such as Benefit Incidence Analysis. Population targets have to be disaggregated according to income, gender, geographic location (urban-rural, regions), type of health facilities, patient type (in-patient or out-patient), among others.

HEALTH GOVERNANCE

Donor assistance contribution for health reform

Assess the implementation of the Sector Development Approach for Health (SDAH) in rationalizing donor activities and programs in health reforms and determine areas where donor assistance have made significant impact in health sector development or health reforms implementation.

Readiness and capacities of local government executives (LGEs)/ local government units (LGUs) in managing high financed investment for public health programs such as TB and other programs

Strengthen the stewardship role of Local Government Units in managing health programs, particularly Local Chief Executives in assuming responsibility for management of high financed health programs and projects. Document best practices for possible replication.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

Functionality of health management systems (including its local health bodies/communities)

Determine and assess the existing management systems in finance and procurement services at national (e.g., DOH central office), subnational (e.g., Centers for Health Development) and local (e.g., Local Government Units) levels, and propose an integrative mechanism to allow for seamless implementation of health reforms.

Documentation of LGU utilization and functionality of health information for decision making (best practices)

Review adoptability and functionality of existing health information systems frequently used by LGUs in decision-making and propose for innovative schemes and models to better ensure high level of appreciation and utilization of health information among local chief executives and health planners. Weak models that continually constrain efficiency in the health system and are barriers to the functionality and efficiency of health decision-makers or health managers can also be documented as a lesson.

HEALTH REGULATION

Analysis of the cost and health outcomes of DOH regulatory standards for primary health services and birthing facilities

Determine cost-estimation models to establish rationality in setting quality standards for primary and birthing facilities in support of the Millennium Development Goals target for maternal and infant mortality reduction.

Evaluation of the implementation of the Milk Code to include knowledge and attitudes of families, local officials, health personnel on the implementation of the Implementing Rules and Regulations

Assess the implementation of laws and policies supporting the protection of newborns and infants as provided in Executive Order 51, also known as the Milk Code, the Rooming-In and Breastfeeding Act.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Disease Control and Prevention

- **Tuberculosis**

- **Tuberculosis in vulnerable populations (prison, urban poor, TB in children)**

Tuberculosis remain to be one of the top leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the country with approximately 107 Filipinos dying each day from the disease. Incidence of TB has economic repercussions on both the patient's family and the country since most of those afflicted are in the most economically productive years of their lives. Research such as baseline studies (prevalence) on specific populations (e.g. vulnerable populations), diagnosis, and treatment are needed to generate new information to further strengthen and more effectively address emerging problems and challenges in TB prevention and control.

- **STD/HIV/AIDS**

- **Mapping and assessment of STD/ HIV and AIDS initiatives in the Philippines**

Determine the efficiency, impact and rationality of STD/HIV/AIDS programs and projects in the country, propose cost-efficient measures to maximize contributions and impact of different programs and projects proponents, and harmonize measures with existing programs for rational health reforms implementation.

- **Degenerative and Lifestyle Disorders**

- **Prevalence surveys on risk factors for non communicable diseases (e.g., mental illness, diabetes, kidney disease)**

Among the leading causes of death in the country are non-communicable diseases. These diseases now pose the greatest threat to health in terms of lives lost and disability. Many of the reported risk factors of these diseases can be controlled. Determination of the prevalence of the risk factors of non-communicable diseases is needed to be able to devise strategies and interventions for their prevention and control.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Disease Control and Prevention

- **Environmental health**

Study on the relationship between physical, geographical features (e.g. climate, hazes, flood, etc.) to occurrence of endemic diseases

Climate change is the long term change in the patterns of average weather in a region or the earth itself which can cause alteration or disruption of natural systems, making it possible for vector, water, and food borne diseases to spread or emerge in areas where they had been limited or had not existed. With climate change as a current and emerging problem, its health effects as it relates to occurrence of endemic diseases in particular, needs to be assessed.

Protecting the environment, conserving biodiversity, and managing natural resources to prevent the eventual loss of the remaining biodiversity and its environs and ensure food and environmental security

These are more of policy research studies aimed towards environmental protection and sustainable community development. Some of the possible topics related to this research thrust are:

- impact evaluation of waste materials, eco-tourism, pest management and control, organic agriculture (among others) to safeguard life support systems
- model building studies to overcome the problems and challenges of the environment; and
- case studies/analyses related to poverty alleviation (e.g., food and environmental security; community empowerment, education for sustainable development, management of natural resources for sustainable development; conserving biodiversity: strategies and benefits – who benefits and who do not).

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Disease Control and Prevention

• **Nutrition**

Nutrition plays an important role in maintaining health. With the prevailing nutritional deficiencies and lifestyle related disorders, researches on nutrition will focus on:

- nutrition and health surveys (anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, dietary) to determine magnitude and prevalence of nutritional deficiencies and diet related disorders;
- development of nutrition tools and reference standards relating to nutritional status assessment and prediction of risk particularly for overweight, obesity.
- relationship of nutrition and lifestyle related disorders/conditions to determine risk factors
- best practices on child care for well nourished children 0-5 years old from poor households, to determine and document best practice models in poor rural and urban communities relative to improved nutritional status of children 0-5 years old; and
- cost effectiveness analysis of nutrition interventions for the treatment and management of underweight 0-5 year old Filipino children, to guide program planners in the selection of nutrition interventions on the basis of cost and expected outcomes.

Other Public Health Concerns (Health Education)

Poverty alleviation studies

Poverty alleviation studies intend to improve the quality of life for Filipinos and/or the delivery of basic health services in the community and cover studies on causes and measurements of poverty to include children, the disabled, elderly, people in depressed communities, among others.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Other Public Health Concerns (Health Education)

Studies on the reintegration process of migrant workers (including health workers/ professionals)

Studies will provide empirical information on the conditions of Filipino migrant workers particularly those in the health care industries and propose measure to reintegrate them into the system.

Effect of urbanization (influence of education) on health

The topic relate to lifestyle impact of urbanization such as emerging diseases that may be prevented through education.

Manpower demand and supply studies (including those in health)

Studies will be used as basis for assessing labor-market behavior. Results will serve as good inputs to policy makers, curriculum and educational planners to enable them to come up with intervention measures to balance the production of needed health professionals with the requirements of the health industry.

Comprehensive review of the regulatory function affecting higher education sub-sector (including health education)

The extent of compliance to administrative orders, CHED's policies, standards and guidelines (PSG's) by higher education institutions and its effects (particularly on the delivery of health education) is the main purpose of this research topic.

Evaluation of graduate education program (including health education program)

The topic involves the assessment of existing health related graduate education program and its relevance to health care needs and expectations.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

Other Public Health Concerns (Health Education)

Analysis of the higher education performance indicators (including health education program)

Studies for the topic aim to determine the effectiveness and reliability of the performance indicators used to measure the quality and standards of health related educational programs.

Impact of the international practicum training program on employability of graduates (to include practicum program for health-related programs)

The topic focus on empirical information on the legal and other implications of medical students sent abroad for practicum.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Development of vaccines

Vaccine is important for the control of infectious diseases of public health significance and has captured market. A number of factors may prevent the application of effective immunization program that include inadequate delivery, constantly mutating nature of some pathogens, and prohibitive cost of vaccines. There is need to develop strategies to produce vaccines that are widely available, sustainable, offers longer protective immunity, and cost effective. The priorities for vaccine development are influenza, rabies and schistosomiasis.

Development of Diagnostic Kits for Priority Diseases

Priority diagnostics kits are intended for the detection of infectious diseases like schistosomiasis, dengue, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis drug resistance. These diagnostic kits should be inexpensive, simple, rapid, highly sensitive and specific for the Philippine setting. These kits can be developed through techniques of modern biotechnology.

Development of functional foods (virgin coconut oil, yacon, malunggay, coconut flour, ginger)

Over the years, consumers have become aware of alternative but reliable ways to maintain and promote health through consuming foods with potential health benefits. Functional foods are generally accepted as foods that provide health benefits beyond nutrition function. R and D initiatives on functional foods involve the conduct of basic and applied studies such as: characterization, safety assessment and establishment of health benefits to determine and understand the role of food and food components in health beyond their basic nutrient function. Health benefits to be studied will specifically address prevention of disease risk for CVD and diabetes. Knowledge generated will be the basis for developing functional food products and its eventual commercialization.

SHORT LISTED NUHRA PRIORITIES

HEALTH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Development of herbal drugs for priority diseases

Herbal drugs developed from indigenous plants will increase people's access to safe, effective but affordable drugs against priority diseases. Screening of plants for safety and biological activity using animal models (pharmacologic, toxicologic , mutagenicity, bioassay studies) is done prior to human clinical testing. Dosage formulation studies are done so that high quality and accurate amount of the plant drug could be safely administered and stored. Clinical studies involve testing of developed drugs in human subjects in a clinical setting following the principles of Good Clinical Practice. Propagation studies determine the appropriate propagation, production, harvesting, post harvest handling and storage of medicinal plant raw materials.

VCO for antimicrobial and antifungal properties

There has been an increasing demand for the use of natural ingredients in personal care products. VCO is reportedly a good antimicrobial and antifungal agent. These potential benefits have to be scientifically validated and subsequently used as basis for product development which in turn will provide opportunities for dermatologic uses.

THE PNHRS RESEARCH GRANT

- The PNHRS research fund assistance for 2009-2010 will come from the Department of Health (DOH), Philippine Council for Health Research and Development – Department of Science and Technology (PCHRD-DOST), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) through the Zonal Research Centers (ZRCs).
 - *DOH will fund proposals that address priority topics on Fourmula One.*
 - *PCHRD-DOST will fund proposals that address priority topics on technology development and health service delivery.*
 - *CHED will fund proposals that address priority topics on health education.*
- Research proposals that address DOH and PCHRD-DOST research priorities will be processed at PCHRD-DOST while proposals that address CHED priority topics will be referred to CHED Central Office for processing and funding by the Zonal Research Centers.

GRANT APPLICATION

- Researchers are required to submit a research proposal and other requirements. (Downloadable from www.healthresearch.ph)
- Proposals should be endorsed by the concerned Regional Health Research and Development Committee.
- Proposals can be submitted online at aforementioned website or mailed at the address given at the last page of this booklet.
- Approval for the research grant will be based on a review process.

Support the NUHRA

The PNHRS needs:

- o Researchers – to conduct studies presented in the NUHRA
- o Members of the academe - to integrate the NUHRA in their research projects and teaching activities (thesis/dissertation)
- o Professional societies and related industries – to integrate the NUHRA in their research projects
- o Donors – to fund research on the updated priorities

For more information, please get in touch with the
PNHRS RESEARCH AGENDA COMMITTEE c/o the
Committee Secretariat:

**RESEARCH MANAGEMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
PHILIPPINE COUNCIL FOR HEALTH
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Department of Science and Technology
Gen. Santos Avenue, Bicutan, Taguig City, Metro Manila
Tel # 837-75-35; 837-73-36
Fax # 837-29-24; 837-29-42
Email: pnhrs_resmngtcom@yahoogroups.com

**HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND PLANNING BUREAU**

Department of Health
San Lazaro Compound, Rizal Avenue, Sta. Cruz, Manila
Tel # 781-43-62
Fax # 711-53-77

Or visit the PNHRS website:
www.healthresearch.ph

PNHRS RESEARCH AGENDA COMMITTEE

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