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Good morning, colleagues.

About two weeks ago the advisory council of RHRDC-7 met in order to answer the guide questions given to us in preparation for this PNHRS Week. So, the following is the output of the group.

The first question given to us is: As a health research network in what areas have we converged?

RHRDC is pursuing convergence through the planning and conduct of health research activities among member institutions and other regional partners. During the last few years we have the following:

- Health Research and Development Twinning between Cebu Institute of Medicine and West Visayas State University College of Medicine in Iloilo City. This was not mentioned by our Keynote Speaker earlier, Dr. Federico Macaranas, but this project is also PCHRD initiated;
- Workshop on critical appraisal for diagnosis, therapy and prognosis conducted by the Clinical Epidemiology Unit at Cebu Institute of Medicine on October 25-26, 2006;
- Research paper contest for faculty and resident physicians conducted by the Center for Health Development Central Visayas at the DOH Region 7 office on November 28, 2006;
- Forum on recent Population Research Methodologies conducted by the Philippine Population Association at Casino Español de Cebu on July 27, 2007;
- Adapting Guidelines on the Ethical Use of Animals in Research conducted at Matias H. Aznar Memorial College of Medicine on December 13-14, 2007;
- Research into Action: Regional Health Research Forum for Regions 6, 7 and 8 conducted by the Center for Health Development Central Visayas at Crown Regency Hotel in Guadalupe, Cebu City on February 26-27, 2008;
- Lectures by Balik Scientist Awardees sponsored by the Philippine Council for Advanced Science and Technology Research and Development at Cebu Institute of Medicine on April 3, 2008;

And we have two lectures:

- Salt Sensitive Hypertension: You Are What You Eat and What Your Parent Gave You by Pedro A. Jose MD, PhD, Georgetown University Medical Center, Washington DC;
- and Emergence of Systems Biology and Its Impact on Bioscience, Biomedicine and Biotechnology by Eduardo R. Mendoza PhD, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Federal Republic of Germany.

The second question given to us was: How has this convergence of network activities work to our institution's advantage and what are the positive fruits of our convergence?

The convergence of RHRDC-7 activities works to the advantage of member institutions by way of:

1. Development of institutional health research capacity; and
2. Collaboration with important regional and national partners.

There was enhanced institutional health research capacity in the following:

- the twinning of Cebu Institute of Medicine with West Visayas State University College of Medicine;
- critical appraisal for diagnosis, therapy and prognosis;
- recent population research methodologies;
- adaption of guidelines on the ethical use of animals in research;
- salt sensitive hypertension; and
- systems biology and its impact on bioscience, biomedicine and biotechnology.

Examples of institutional collaboration are those with West Visayas University College of Medicine, Center for Health Development Central Visayas, Philippine Population Association, and the Philippine Council for Advanced Science and Technology Research and Foundation.

The third question: In our health research network, what more do we need to do to achieve convergence, or to fill in the gaps?

To achieve more effective convergence the network needs to:

1. Systematically follow through on health research activities it has conducted to facilitate adaption of the knowledge and skills at member institutions; and
2. Assure the active commitment of member institutions.

To facilitate institutional follow through these activities have to be done—regarding the critical appraisal for diagnosis, therapy and prognosis:

- transfer of technical expertise on critical appraisal to regional schools of medicine, health-related institutions, and health practitioners;
- promote use of the recent population research methodologies in current research practice at member institutions;
- promote awareness of the emerging science of systems biology at schools of medicine and departments of biology and information technology;
- aid medical schools and universities using animals for research to draft protocols on the ethical use of animals in research, construct proper animal facilities, and gain accreditation from the Department of Agriculture.

To assure active institutional commitment, the Advisory Council of RHRDC-7 should look at the convergence of the network and stakeholders in terms of:

1. Common intent;
2. Collaborative action; and
3. Institutional commitment.

Convergence of the network in terms of common intent lies in the:

- understanding and the fusion within the respective member institutions of Philippine policy on and programs in public health;
- understanding of the purpose and structure of the Philippine National Health Research System;
- the full scope of problems of health in Region 7; and
- the difficulties and successes encountered in the implementation of health programs in the region by the Department of Health Center for Health Development Central Visayas and the local government units.

Convergence of the network in terms of collaborative action lies in the conduct of research by either individual member institutions or collaboratively in a manner in which the health problems to be investigated are identified together with the appropriate stakeholders, and the implications of research results interpreted together with them.

The proactive organizing of presentations of health research for the network's stakeholders, particularly staff of the regional office of the Department of Health, chief executive officers and technical staff of local government units and non-government organizations, and the development of a knowledge pool on regional health problems, regional health research, and the successes and difficulties encountered in the implementation of health policy and programs in the region.

Convergence of the network in terms of institutional investment lies in:

- the building of health research capacity and knowledge management at the respective member institutions;
- provision of time of faculty in research staff for involvement in the planning and implementation of collaborative research and research presentations together with the network's regional health stakeholders; and
- investment in facilities and equipment to gradually augment the capacity of member institutions to deliver quality health research either individually or collaboratively.

The fourth question: How can we foster better network in the region, between regions, nationally and internationally?

RHRDC-7 has to foster better networking among member institutions and other stakeholders by moving from a supply concept and structure of health research in the region to one of demand.

The supply concept and structure of health research that has been the traditional approach of RHRDC-7 network and which has garnered diminishing returns in recent years focuses upon

the conduct of capacity building and the provision of training in health research based solely on the participation of individual faculty and staff of medical schools and universities at workshops. The solicitation of proposals and awarding of grants for health research to individual faculty and staff of medical schools and universities presumably inline with regional health research agenda, and the dissemination of completed health research by individual faculty and staff to a variety of stakeholders but, in a manner, suitable for presentation only to other researchers with little thought given to its implications for health research policy and improvement of the delivery of health service programs.

On the other hand, the demand concept and structure of health research that will entail a new understanding in approaching health research in the region and an active institutional commitment of member institutions should focus upon the developing of research capacity in strategic areas of regional health on an institutional basis that may be deployed in a complimentary and an inter-institutional manner in addition to supervising research of students and resident physicians. The formulating of health research problems conjointly with regional stakeholders, health personnel of Center for Health Development Central Visayas, local government units, non-government organizations, and barangays and local communities, and determination of the interpretation and implications of resource of research together with them, and the proactive designing and conducting of health research presentations for regional policymakers and program implementers that include the status of research on urgent health issues regionally and elsewhere, as well as the implications of this research for health policy and health service program delivery in the region.

In summary, the change in mental model will—of necessity—be from a focus on the individual researcher, his training and solicitation of research to one of investing in institutional health research capacity, collaboration and complementarity of member institutions, and within the network the management of knowledge on regional health problems and approachers to their allegation.

Thank you for your attention.

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