

# Health systems research needs overhaul

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In the conclusion to a three-part series of articles addressing the current challenges and opportunities for the development of Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR), Sara Bennett of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore USA and colleagues lay out an agenda for action to help build the field: 1) local actors, including policy-makers and researchers, must have a greater say in determining the nature of HPSR conducted; 2) a better shared understanding of theoretical frames and methodological approaches for HPSR, including journals, methods training, and teaching curricula, must be developed; and 3) dedicated and supportive homes for HPSR in universities and independent research institutes are needed.

The authors say: "HPSR is currently at a tipping point.....Given the rush of new blood and interest in HPSR, we urgently need to move beyond individual explanations of what we do. Instead, we need to take advantage of the current interest to develop the programs and structures of a fully-fledged scientific field with core curricula, text books, scientific meetings, communities of practice, academic departments, and journals."

They go on: "Through investment ... HPSR can develop into a more crystalline form, underpinned by shared and inter-disciplinary understandings. Only with this consolidated intellectual development can the field of HPSR realize its full potential to contribute new knowledge for health systems strengthening."

**More information:** Bennett S, Agyepong IA, Sheikh K, Hanson K,

Ssengooba F, et al. (2011) Building the Field of Health Policy and Systems Research: An Agenda for Action. PLoS Med 8(8): e1001081. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001081](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001081)

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