

The BMJ launches special collection on research for health in the Americas

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Collection seeks to shape the research agenda and help fulfil the promise of high quality health for all

High quality research—and the evidence that it yields—is essential for improving [global health](#) and health equity, as well as economic development. Research for health refers to a system which seeks to harness science, technology and broader knowledge to produce research-based evidence and tools for improving global health.

It is a top priority for the World Health Organization (WHO) to help strengthen health systems and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2009, member states of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) therefore approved a regional policy on research for health in the Americas.

It was developed to complement the WHO's Strategy on Research for Health, based on the premise that policies and practices in support of health worldwide should be grounded in the best scientific knowledge.

By December 2017, 16 countries reported a national policy on research for health, and 18 Caribbean community countries endorsed a common policy.

Yet striking differences remain between countries in their ability to

deliver, use, and organize research for health, or to monitor their research capacity, argue Dr. Kamran Abbasi, Executive Editor at *The BMJ*, along with Carissa Etienne and Luis Gabriel Cuervo at Pan American Health, in an editorial to launch the collection.

For example, they say the organization and management of research is non-existent in places, and the benefits of big data, social media, and other digital tools are waiting to be seized.

They point out that, in the past decade, research reporting standards improved and trial registries brought transparency to research, but say "the need remains to integrate developments in ways that benefit citizens, and to do it consistently in all countries."

Unfortunately, research remains a weak public health function in the Americas and this must change, they write. This special collection of articles takes stock of progress since the introduction of the PAHO [policy](#), identifies areas of slow progress, and discusses the challenges ahead.

"We welcome contributions that add to the debate in the Americas on how to integrate research into [health](#) systems, how to organize research, and how to increase its value."

Fostering best practices and enhancing standards for research is considered a fundamental aim for the Americas, they say. "We seek to shape the [research](#) agenda in the Americas and globally by stimulating the generation, translation, and dissemination of valuable knowledge.

And we urge other regions to share their stories, and build a common narrative for better [health systems](#) and a healthier world," they conclude.

More information: Read the collection of articles here:

www.bmj.com/health-research-americas

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