

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉ

EM ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL
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Agenda item 6.

PROGRESS REPORT ON RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
IN DIARRHOEAL DISEASES

Introduction

Regional activities in diarrhoeal diseases control expanded considerably during the last two years. The combined health service/research approach adopted by the programme is considered to be the most appropriate approach to achieve the regional objective of reducing mortality and morbidity from diarrhoeal diseases.

Policy situation

Regional efforts have been concentrated on formulation and implementation of national Diarrhoeal Diseases Control (CDD) programmes, as well as on training and applied research. Guided by the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Group of the CDD Programme and the meeting of the interested parties, it has been agreed that health service (operational) research, financially supported by WHO, should as much as possible be closely linked with national CDD programmes. The research should address the problems encountered in the planning for or in the implementation of the national programmes.

To this effect an effort is being made at the time of drafting national CDD programmes to identify priority areas for research which are taken into consideration when reviewing proposals for financial support.

Also an attempt is being made to ensure that the principal investigators (mostly from universities), who submit proposals not related to national CDD programme priorities, achieve a linkage between their proposals and the national CDD programme.

One of the approaches adopted in this direction was to convene national meetings between national CDD staff and potential national research workers. Two such meetings were held one in Egypt and the other in Pakistan. During these meetings operational research issues were discussed and national priorities outlined. The meetings have succeeded in making research workers think more closely of research projects that are of some relevance to national CDD programmes.

Status of projects financially supported by WHO

At the last meeting of the EM/ACMR information was provided on seven projects receiving WHO support. Two of these projects have been completed, four are very near to completion and one has not started yet because of the prevailing conditions in Lebanon

Two more projects have been approved for support

- a) Pilot study on national diarrhoeal diseases morbidity and mortality
- b) Follow-up of children who participated in the controlled field trial of the Ty21 a Vaccine.

The second meeting of the Regional Scientific Working Group will be held immediately following the EM/ACMR meeting, and will review the proposals received so far, including those generated at the above-mentioned meetings.

Stimulation of research

Several ways have been adopted to stimulate the submission of applied research proposals. These included

- a) Distribution of announcements about the research funds to all organizations interested in research activities in the Region, such as universities and research institutions, and also to individual investigators
- b) Efforts are being made by WHO staff and short-term consultants visiting Member States for activities related to diarrhoeal diseases to discuss and stimulate Ministry of Health officials and national research workers to submit research proposals on subjects of relevance to national CDD programmes.
- c) Site visits to institutions potentially capable of conducting research.
- d) Presentations about the regional CDD activities including research at relevant regional/national meetings

Monitoring of research proposals

Investigators are requested to submit a yearly report on the progress of their studies. Also, members of the Secretariat have made site visits for WHO financially supported projects. The latter were found to be most useful in assessing and monitoring the progress of the studies