

**M8 Alliance Statement from the World Health Summit
Regional Meeting – Latin America, São Paulo, Brazil**

São Paulo, April 08, 2014

Health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being and should be secured through economic and social policies. While the principles of universality, equality and integrality of health care have become unquestionable ethical and social values, increasingly new challenges are posed to contemporary health policies.

Significant changes in the socio-demographic and epidemiological profile of the population, especially among developing countries, which require a thorough evaluation of proposals for organization and design of health care models have been observed. On the other hand, there is the question of the relationship between health and development, particularly important among countries with accelerated growth and urbanization. This brings the question to what extent investing in health contributes to growth and development, or how economic growth can contribute to the improvement of health conditions? Technological innovation in health is an investment that contributes to economic development to the extent that health represents a significant percentage of GDP.

Currently, the UN is promoting debates about the universal health coverage, suggesting it should be a goal for all countries of the world, making increasingly necessary to discuss strategies for ensuring universal access of the population to health services.

Academic institutions have played an important role in Public Health in Latin America, both in delivering high-level health education and in the development of biomedical research aimed at contributing to the health system. Therefore, concluding the discussions at the World Health Summit Regional Meeting – Latin America, the M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies addresses the following call for action in five major areas:

1. Healthy life expectancy

Health in Latin American countries has improved significantly in recent years with observed increases in life expectancy. Although there have been considerable progresses in infant mortality, infectious and others diseases associated with poverty, there are still important public health issues that are now accompanied by the growing burden of chronic diseases. To ensure that people have the possibility not only to survive and live longer lives but also to stay healthy, it is necessary: a. maintain improving survival (reduce child and maternal mortality); b. reduce the burden of diseases (AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc plus NCDs); c. decrease levels of risk factors (smoking, access to water and sanitation etc). Concerted strategies targeting these goals and the huge social inequalities present in the region are major challenges to elaborate a plan and act for a better health of the population.

2. Urban health / health in megacities.

Urbanization is one of the most important global phenomena of this century, with significant impacts on health. Brazil and Latin America constitute one of the most urbanized regions in the world with approximately 80% of the population residing in urban areas. The region has 33 cities with more than two million inhabitants, four of them, Mexico City, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, are among the 20 largest cities in the world. Rapid urbanization, with few regulatory and control mechanisms, have brought huge impacts on population health. Problems such as inadequate sanitation, poor housing conditions, physical and chemical pollution of air, water and land, violence and drug use are present in major cities. These challenges call for approaches that address the social, cultural, economic, environmental and political determinants of health in order to improve the quality of life, equity and sustainability.

3. Increased research capacity to incorporate technologies.

The health sector represents an important part of the economy, both in terms of research and development, and in terms of participation in the generation of the Gross Domestic Product of countries, which means that

technological investments in health will impact on the socio-political and economic spheres. Technological changes are occurring in increasingly shorter periods of time generating considerable impacts on the population, in terms of search for better quality of life, and on the health systems, in terms of the pressures for the incorporation of new technologies and the high costs they generate. The role of basic science in health and industrial complex in the technological innovation should be encouraged to meet these priorities, combined with the production of knowledge and the development of technologies provided by academic institutes in the field of drugs/medicines, vaccines, diagnostic reagents, equipment, and blood products. Population studies in Latin America are necessary to provide knowledge and technologies to formulate policies with the most effective cost/benefit.

4. Management of health systems to ensure universal coverage and technologies to formulate plans.

The organization of health services in Latin America has experienced significant changes imposed by new epidemiological realities associated with social demands and political-economic conjuncture. Brazil presents particularities in this field, while providing a system, the National Health System, due to its universal character, faces challenges to ensure quality of the services and meet the demands of the population. Among the mechanisms used to strengthen the health systems are the public-private partnerships, seeking to enhance government capacity with private sector activity, further enhancing the supplemental character of the latter and ensuring universal coverage. The public-private mix is experiencing several interactions which deserve analysis in identifying the impact on existing model of universal health care system.

5. Health Education.

Training of human resources in the medical field involves combining technical expertise with ethical, humanistic and social responsibility. However, the contents and the teaching model need to evolve over time, to account for the emerging challenges of the health systems such as technological innovation, epidemiological and demographic transitions, the diversification of medical knowledge areas, as well as the speed in which

knowledge is produced and, in some cases, transformed into new technologies. This requires adaptation of health education and research to meet local priorities and a redefinition of the pedagogical model used in the training of medical students, encouraging undergraduate research activities, use of information technology, diversification of learning scenarios, recovery of humanization in clinical care practice, a competency-driven approach to curriculum and team-based learning, inter and transprofessional education among others. The major challenges for the Academic Health Centers are to engage with the community to produce health professional graduates capable to provide adequate health service into the future.

The M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies urges representatives of all health related sectors to help achieving these five goals:

1. Planning and acting for better health of the population through concerted strategies targeting higher health life expectancy and facing the social inequalities.
2. Devising policies that address the multifactorial social, economic, environmental and political determinants of health related to urbanization.
3. Strengthening research and development capacity as an essential way to incorporate new technologies and to perform population studies which are necessary to establish the best cost-benefit policies for health.
4. Ensuring a true universal health coverage considering the public-private mix and its impact on the existing model of universal health care system.
5. Adopting the educational system for health professionals according to local priorities, in order to provide adequate health services into the future.