

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Science has led to dramatic improvements in health worldwide. Yet all is not well. Disparities and inequities in health remain major development challenges in the new millennium, and malfunctioning health systems are at the heart of the problem. Half the world's deaths could be prevented with simple and cost-effective interventions. But not enough is known about how to make these more widely available to the people who need them.

*Knowledge for Better Health* reviews the current state of global health research and concludes that:

- Much more investment is needed for a new, innovative approach to research on health systems.
- Health research must be managed more effectively if it is to strengthen health systems and build public confidence in science.
- Stronger emphasis should be placed on translating knowledge into action to improve public health by bridging the gap between what is known and what is actually being done.

### THE MAIN POINTS MADE BY THE REPORT ARE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Science must help to improve global public health systems. It should not focus solely on advancing academic knowledge or confine itself to producing drugs, diagnostics, vaccines and medical devices.
2. Biomedical discoveries cannot improve people's health without research to find out how to apply them specifically within different health systems, population groups, and diverse political and social contexts.
3. Health systems must interact closely with health research systems to generate and use relevant knowledge for their own improvement. A culture of mutual learning, problem-solving and innovation should be the basis of this relationship.
4. Every country should have a national health research system that focuses its energies on health problems of national interest, especially those that will strengthen health systems. Each health research system should have strong leadership and effective management to enable it to allocate resources efficiently and fairly, sustain human and institutional capacities, generate and use knowledge, and create an environment in which research can flourish.

5. All countries should be able to participate in global health research. Such research should be conducted efficiently, equitably, ethically and with strong public support and participation.
6. Equitable access to both published and unpublished research information is a priority. Such information should be shared with a range of stakeholders in an appropriate format. In particular, an environment must be created where the users of research can access and find relevant knowledge to inform their decisions. The main users of research are policy-makers, health professionals, researchers, the public, civil society, patients, health system managers, and health insurers.
7. An environment conducive to evidence-informed health policy and practice should be created. To achieve this, the producers and users of health research should work more closely together to shape the research agenda and to ensure that research is used to improve health.
8. New research should build on existing knowledge and health decision-makers should use research syntheses to inform policy and practice. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences for consumers of health care and to inefficient use of limited resources for health care provision and research.
9. Health systems research suffers from a poor image and has been underfunded compared to biomedical research despite widespread recognition of its importance. Key priorities in this area need to be identified and more funds are needed to develop new methodologies and innovations to deal with the changing environment within which health systems currently operate.
10. The culture and practice of health research should reach beyond academic institutions and laboratories to involve health service providers, policy-makers, the public and civil society more. Any attempt to implement a health improvement programme without community support may fail. Gaining the support of communities to implement this is vital, as they can lobby governments to accept change
11. To respond more effectively at national and global level to today's public health challenges, health research must be reoriented to strengthen health systems through more effective management, by attracting more investments for more innovative research on health systems, and by translating knowledge into action to improve public health.
12. The report recommends that certain aspects of health research systems need to be managed more closely to make even more progress in future, while building on past achievements of science and health research.