Reviewer’s report

Title: The Panamanian health research system: a baseline analysis for the construction of a new phase

Version: 1 Date: 27 May 2013

Reviewer: Jorge Motta

Reviewer’s report:

The Panamanian health research system: a baseline analysis for the construction of a new phase.
Authors: Luz Romero, MD. Cristiane Quental PhD

The analysis of Panama’s health research system done the authors undertaken is well written, focused, accurate thorough and, although not the first analysis of this very young system, proposes a way forward. The methods utilized are appropriate and contains enough data and detail to perform the task they set to perform. The title and abstract describe well what are the main points of the article and the discussion is comprehensive and conclusions reached are supported by the data

Major Compulsory Review

The most thorny issue that they describe but not offer clearly a solution is the mandate of the Law 89 that places the stewardship of biomedical research outside the MINSA (the responsible for health matters in the country) or SENACYT (the institution that finances projects and scholarships) an in the hands of the Gorgas Institute. This mandate is not respected by any of the main actors (MINSA, the Universities, Indicasat) If things are going move forward, a revision of this Law 89 is needed and a credible and respected steward will have to be defined. If this is not done, the present disarticulation will continue and the weakness that this has brought upon the health research system will continue. How do the authors propose to resolve the problem posed by Law 89?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

No to all the above questions.