Reviewer's report

Title: Fulfillment of the Brazilian Agenda of Priorities in Health Research

Version: 5 Date: 31 May 2011

Reviewer: Ayo Palmer

Reviewer's report:

Although the authors have included additional details, the main criticism of this paper has still not been addressed. The paper is still a description rather than a critique of how the research agenda was fulfilled with support from the Ministry of Health. Specifically, the issues raised in point 5 of my original comments under Major revision are still outstanding.

2. The value of this paper should be its wider applicability beyond the context of Brazil. What is missing is an in depth analysis of how the fulfilment occurred. What are the key messages and lessons learned for other countries who wish to embark on implementing a health research priority agenda? Perhaps a few examples may bring out the limited analysis provided so far in the paper.

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For example the main objective of decentralization and democratization of health research is …to reduce regional inequities in scientific knowledge production (paragraph 2, p5). However, no data is presented to show how regional inequities have been reduced. The authors have kindly indicated the number of Masters Dissertations, Doctoral Theses and patents resulting from the PSSUS but do not show how these are distributed across the regions. In order to demonstrate a reduction in regional inequities it would be important to define the term regional inequities, identify an indicator to measure it and then show the change in this indicator from the period before the PSSUS to the present period. The indicator should take into consideration the population size of the regions as well as the need for these post graduate qualifications in the different regions.

In the section on Health Technology Assessment (p5), the aim of
strengthening HTA research is to encourage the ....regular use of scientific evidence in the decision-making process. The authors state that DECIT commissioned 66 systematic reviews out of which 54 have been completed. However, only seven of these reviews are reported to have been used directly for CITEC decisions. It would be helpful to critically comment on this. For instance, why were the majority of reviews unused in decision making? What criteria did CITEC use to decide on the reviews to commission? Are there protocols in the research support policy to facilitate the use of research evidence in decision making and were these followed for each systematic review commissioned?

On page 6, the strategic research policy on research and innovation in neglected diseases aims to overcome the 10/90 gap. It would be helpful to provide information about the percentage of research funds spent on neglected diseases before implementation of the NAPHR and after the implementation of the NAPHR. This would allow readers to clearly see how the 10/90 gap is being overcome.

On page 8, the authors indicate that …many barriers were encountered and partially overcome, and give a few examples. In the second paragraph of this section, there is no explanation about what inducements were applied and why high quality proposals were not submitted for some topics of special interest. Was this related to research capacity? Were there regional disparities in the submission of poor quality proposals? Was the problem related to the research topics being those of limited interest to experienced researchers? Furthermore, since these were topics of special interest, how did the failure to find high quality proposals in those areas affect the fulfilment of the NAPHR?

The authors further state in the Conclusion on page 11 that the
affirmative policy to combat regional inequities in health research was successful and should remain as a permanent goal. But what was used to make this judgement about success given that the data provided does not allow for a comparison before and after the development of the agenda?

3. In response to my original comments related to prioritisation of the 24 sub-agenda topics, the authors stated that all 24 sub-agenda are of equal importance. However, on page 9 (paragraph 4) of the revised manuscript, it is stated the …three sub-agenda with the higher amount of resource invested…reflects the priority given to these areas. If all 24 sub-agenda are of equal importance, why are three being prioritised?

Major Compulsory Revisions

The paper should be re-organised to make the value of the commentary more explicit for other countries to benefit from. I would suggest that the authors address the following:

In each section, provide a critical analysis along the lines outlined above;

Clearly outline the key messages and lessons learned following the critique in each section

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests