

Establishment of Respiratory Disease Research Network in Iran

General assembly of the national "Respiratory Disease Research Network" (RDRN) was held in April 2011 with the participation of pulmonologists and head of research centers working on respiratory illnesses and other stakeholder including representatives from non-communicable disease office in the ministry of health, scientific societies, non-governmental organizations, and etc.

Iran Ministry of Health and Medical Education has decided to promote the establishment of the research networks and use them as the mile stones for research management particularly for the national health priorities. The networks has the responsibility to organize, and reinforce the cooperation among its members. Thorough establishment of research networks, public health authorities and health policy makers will collaborate with the scientific community to foster evidence-based public health practices in the area of research networks. In other words, The main objective of biomedical research networks in Iran is to direct the medical research in Iran into the local and national priorities. The research networks' main functions include need assessment, priority setting, and directing the public health programs in the national and regional level. The researchers and research centers will join their forces under the umbrella of these networks with the mission to conduct applied research to decrease the burden of diseases and promote the health among general population.

Respiratory diseases rank 4th cause of deaths in Iran .Respiratory control is also placed among the top priorities by the World Health Organization. The United Nations General Assembly will hold a Non-communicable Disease (NCD) Summit in September 2011 bringing together world head of states to address the rising burden of NCD and discuss solutions and actions need to be undertaken in this respect. The program will mainly focus on 4 major diseases including respiratory diseases, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. The growing prevalence of asthma, lung cancer and cigarette consumption in Iran and concentration of industrial pollutants highlight the importance of respiratory system health in our country.

Stakeholders of respiratory research network could be addressed in three categories. The first group comprises all researchers, research centers, universities, and activists in the field of pulmonary disease. Their main objective of this network is to concentrate on controlling respiratory diseases and to make a connection between research centers and the industrial sector. The second group of beneficiaries includes the policy makers and the authorities in the field of health care, particularly ministry of health and medical education, as well as the health sector in general. They expect that this network actively participate in strategy planning, policy making and programming for the management of pulmonary diseases and provide enough evidence for making the right decisions. The third and probably the most important group of beneficiaries are Iranian citizens who will ultimately benefit from the results of researches, and cooperation between the researchers and health authorities in the public and private sectors, leading to improvement in the quality of care public health management. Obviating this need is the most important indicator of success in this network.

The respiratory disease research network will lead the research among the member to explore evidence for optimal intervention in different aspects of disease control including the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, and palliation. In other words, we will be actively on boards to design and implement a national comprehensive program for control of respiratory diseases and mitigate the risk of incidence, prevalence and mortality of different respiratory illnesses in Iran.

It is noteworthy that research networks should set the research priorities based on the country's requirements. For instance, although tuberculosis is globally a rare disease, it ranks among the top priorities in Iran. Respiratory disease research network, will also cover the following topics:

Airway diseases, tobacco control, pulmonary rehabilitation, patient education, pulmonary infections, acute respiratory failure, occupational medicine, environmental health, equipments required for patients with pulmonary diseases such as ventilator, sleep disorders, preparing standard therapeutic and diagnostic protocols, establishment of registration system for the patients, and enhancing the research infrastructure and providing facilities for researchers in the field. In particular, as local mandate, we will guide the researchers towards understanding etiology and management of patients who are the main victims of imposed Iraq-Iran war.

Steering Committee of RDRN should take this promising opportunity and put together all the infrastructure and resource available among the member centers to achieve its objectives.

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