Health research priorities in Argentina: how to get them funded?

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The methodology for facilitating priority setting must be understood as a constantly reviewed, recurrent, long-term process, which must be explicit and transparent, in which stakeholders with diverse interests and expertise take part, thus ensuring the participation of the community, either directly or through representative organizations. Following the Global Forum methodology, we have used the Combined Approach Matrix (CAM) as a strategy to set research priorities. CAM is a process encompassing eight steps which is as evidence based as possible and incorporates the view of a wide set of policymakers who often operate in a non-rational context. The last step described by the CAM consists in allocating the priority research projects among the research institutions in the country based on their comparative advantages.

Given the fact that the setting of a research agenda through a consulting and building consensus process will help funding organizations make informed choices between competing research options, the second phase of our project will aim at build a consensus-based tool for achieving a national public health research agenda.

Methods

A participatory action research (PAR) approach will be applied. PAR differs from most other approaches to public health research because it is based on reflection, data collection, and action that aim to improve health and reduce health inequities through involving the people who, in turn, take actions to improve their own health. PAR allows that decision making criteria are defined and weighted in an explicit manner. The approach will be organized in four phases 1) forming a collaborative inquiry group with the participants of health research priorities setting process; 2) creating the conditions for the debate with the funding organizations; 3) acting on the inquiry questions how to get fund for the priorities and 4) making meaning (capturing and interpreting the group’s experiences). This process will be a continuous cycle by reconsidering the group, recreating the conditions for group learning, and so on.

Pooling of funds between public funding bodies is one way of enhancing the chances of implementing national priorities. To achieve this goal will strength our health research system.

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