CALL FOR PAPERS

Special issue of the *Pan American Journal of Public Health*

**Primary Health Care in the Americas: Forty Years after Alma-Ata**


**Rationale**

Forty years ago, the World Health Organization member countries agreed on a set of principles at Alma-Ata to protect and promote health of all people by articulating primary health care as the guiding principle of a comprehensive health system. Since the declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978, countries of the Americas have been witnessing tremendous progress, economic growth, and improvements to their health systems. Nevertheless, many challenges remain in the Region, including poverty and inequities, barriers to access health, inefficient models of care, segmentation of health systems, fragmentation of services, insufficient health financing, and weak governance and leadership.

To address the unfinished agenda and promote primary health care-based health systems in the Americas, PAHO has articulated a number of strategies and plans with member states and passed a range of resolutions. In 2007, PAHO’s position paper on Renewing Primary Health Care in the Americas included the definition of elements and functions of a primary health care-based health system that guided the countries of the Region on the transformation of their health systems and assessment of their needs. In 2014, the Resolution on Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, also known as Universal Health, recalled the values of Alma-Ata and called the countries of the Region to move toward health systems where all people and communities have access, without any kind of discrimination, to comprehensive, appropriate and timely, quality health services, as well as access to safe, effective, and affordable quality medicines, while ensuring that the use of such services does not expose users to financial difficulties, especially groups in conditions of vulnerability.

After four decades of efforts and substantial implementation of policies and programs that place primary health care at the center of health systems, it is time to take stock of progress on meeting the goals of primary health care.

**Key topics**

1. **Strategies and programs to reduce inequities in health and health care**

   The reduction of gross health inequalities that exist in the countries and among them has been a major objective cited in many international and national agendas, including the Alma-Alta Declaration, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, PAHO Renewal of Primary Health Care, PAHO Universal Health Strategy, national constitutions, and health plans and programs to name a few. Scientific knowledge developed over the past two
decades shows that there are still significant inequities in health and health care in the Americas, although many countries were able to considerably reduce them. Manuscripts in this category will showcase strategies implemented and evidence supporting improvement in equity in health and health care by increasing the availability of resources for neglected or vulnerable areas, monitoring and evaluation of social determinants of health, programs to reach vulnerable population groups, expansion of primary care and elimination of barriers to make them universally accessible to all, and promotion of community and individual participation in improving health and access to care.

2. Increase response capacity of first level of care
As per the Universal Health Resolution mentioned above, countries have agreed to move towards a primary level of care that has the capacity to address the health needs of their population. Manuscripts being sought under this topic include experiences for increasing the response capacity of the first level of care through implementation of a primary care based model, integrated delivery of services, integrated care for people with chronic diseases, utilization of multidisciplinary teams in the delivery of primary care services, empowerment of people and communities by educating them about their rights and responsibilities and encouraging their participation in disease prevention, health promotion and health policy-making, incorporation of health technology and rational use of medicines, and use of telemedicine.

3. Leadership and governance
Health sector leadership and health governance are integral to the transformation of a health system and to financing for health. During the past 40 years, many governments have formulated national policies, strategies and plans of action, in coordination with other sectors, to launch and sustain primary care as a health system strategy, as called by the Alma-Ata Declaration. Manuscripts under this section will include policies, strategies and plans that establish mechanisms for social participation in policy development; monitoring and evaluation of the health system; assessment of political economy to mobilize the country’s resources and use them rationally; implementation of comprehensive, appropriate, timely, quality health services that are evidence-based; change management practices to improve health services; policies to improve training, distribution, and satisfactory performance of human resources; mobilization and allocation of financial resources to promote access and to offer protection against financial hardship; intersectoral coordination of actions to improve the health of the population; and programs to improve quality and use of health technologies to benefit people.

4. Organizing the community to promote universal access to health and universal health coverage
Actions to protect and promote the health of all people require and encourage maximum community and individual participation in the planning, organization, operation and monitoring of the health system and activities to restore and promote health and prevent diseases, making fullest use of local, national and other available resources. Actions that enable communities to participate in interventions to improve their health have been observed in many countries of the Region. Manuscripts under this topic will include evidence of community development and participation in activities to strengthen health and community by promoting the active participation of municipalities and social organizations in improving living conditions and developing healthy spaces to live, work, and play. Also important is evidence on the impact of empowering people and communities through training, active participation, and access to information, to promote an active role in policy-making, in actions to address social determinants of health, and in health promotion and protection.

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Language of Submissions
Papers will be accepted in Portuguese, Spanish and English. The manuscript selection process will follow the journal peer-review procedures.

Publishing Standards
Contributions include original research papers, systematic reviews, opinion and analysis, special reports, and brief communications. In submitting papers, authors must follow the Instructions to Authors of the Pan American Journal of Public Health.

Please indicate in the cover letter that the manuscript is being submitted for the special issue on Primary Health Care in the Americas: Forty Years after Alma-Ata

Deadline: December 29, 2017

Questions: contact Gisele Almeida at almeidag@paho.org (Subject: Question on Alma-Ata)

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