

LAUNCH OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH SELF-LEARNING COURSE

ENGLISH, PORTUGUESE, AND SPANISH

CONCEPTUAL NOTE

The development of health systems for universal health, according to integrated care model, defined by the country, requires having sufficient human resources for health with knowledge, skills, attitudes and that are well-distributed in places where they are best positioned to respond to the needs of the population.

In 1978, during the Alma-Ata Conference, world leaders proclaimed Primary Health Care (PHC) as the best strategy for improving population health. The commitment to this view was reestablished, forty years later, in 2018 at the Conference of Astana. Experience has demonstrated that only health systems with comprehensive PHC can advance toward universal health with efficiency and quality. In this approach, human resources for health are considered fundamental, if not essential, to guaranteeing effective health systems that are equitable, inclusive, based on PHC and centered on the patient and the community.

The efforts to strengthen PHC developed by countries, whether at the national, regional or local level, have been continuous and have achieved significant progress. However, in many cases, these initiatives were only partially developed or do not achieve the desired outcomes for multiple reasons. Lack of availability and quality of human resources for health is often cited as one of the barriers for achieving universal health.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in consultation with Member States, has approved the Strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage (2017) and its corresponding Plan of Action 2018-2023,¹ recognizing the need to strengthen political action and decision-making that effectively guarantee universal access to quality health care and services for the population. The proposed strategic lines of action are the following:

1. Strengthen and consolidate governance and leadership in human resources for health.

¹ These documents present the situational analysis, arguments and policy lines agreed to by the PAHO Member States to strengthen human resources for health and achieve universal health.

2. Develop conditions and capacities in human resources for health to expand access to health and health coverage, with equity and quality.
3. Partner with the education sector to respond to the needs of health systems in transformation toward universal access to health and universal health coverage.

Implementing policies for the development of human resources for health is the responsibility of all public policymakers in our region. The development and implementation of these policies must take an intersectoral approach that, while the leading actors are the Ministry of Health and/or Health Authorities, it also involves the Ministries of Education, Science, Technology, Finance, Labor as well as the local government, educational and research institutions, among others.

PAHO, in order to maintain an open dialogue about the contents, objectives and goals for the development of human resources for universal health in the Region of the Americas for the period 2020-2023, has developed the Human Resources for Universal Health Self-Learning course. This course is a call to action as well as an opportunity to learn in detail the strategy approved by PAHO's governing bodies.

We are pleased to make this course available in English, Portuguese and Spanish and we hope that this material will be discussed, analyzed and adapted according to each country's necessities.

Washington, DC. 30 October, 2019