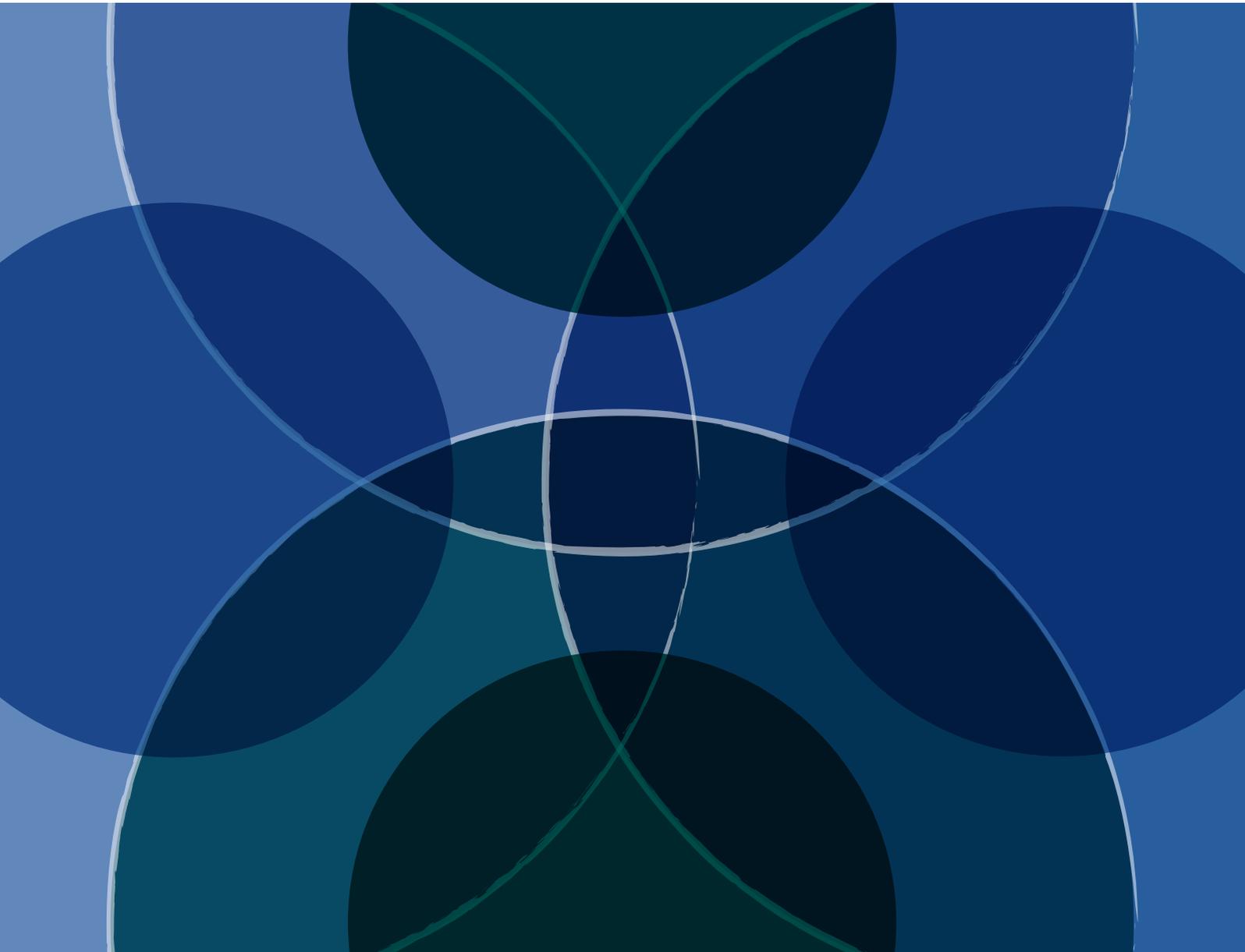
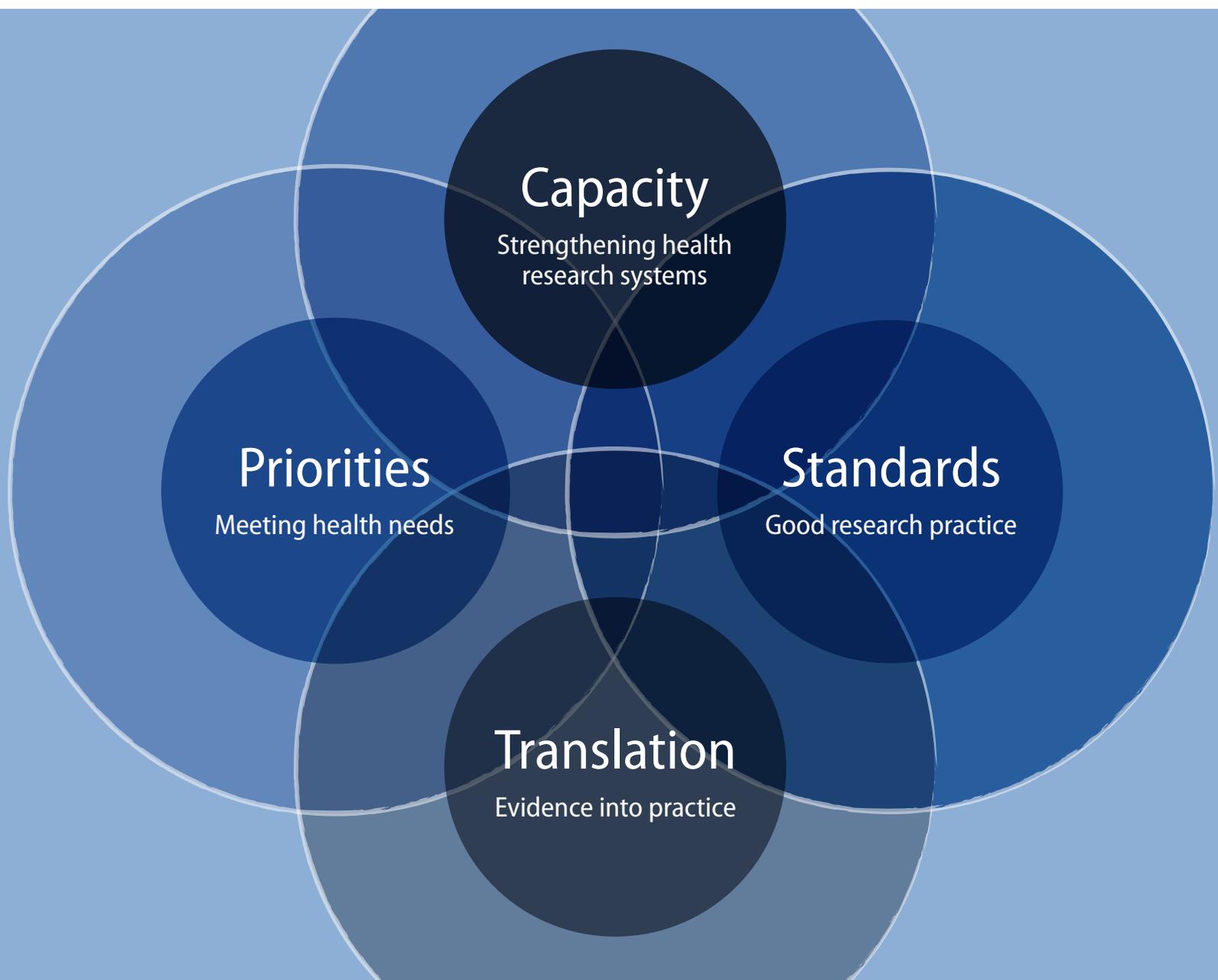


The WHO strategy on research for health



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1. Introduction

High-quality research is essential for the World Health Organization (WHO) to achieve its constitutional objective, namely “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health”. Research and the evidence that research yields are critical elements for improving global health and health equity, as well as economic development.

WHO has long given high priority to research. The fundamental importance of research for WHO is identified in Article 2 of the Organization’s Constitution: “to promote and conduct research in the field of health”. In 1959, the first Advisory Committee on Medical Research was established and regional advisory committees were to follow. Renamed the Advisory Committee on Health Research in 1986, the committee continues to convene global experts for the purpose of advising WHO on its research policies. Research concerns have appeared frequently on the agendas of World Health Assemblies.

WHO’s strategy on research for health, approved by the Sixty-third World Health Assembly in May 2010, is based on the premise that policies and practices in support of health worldwide should be grounded in the best scientific knowledge. The strategy’s mission is that all partners should work together to harness science, technology and broader knowledge in order to produce research-based evidence and tools for improving global health.

The WHO strategy builds on a number of WHO’s core features: neutrality and independence; global membership; unique and extensive experience in international public health; a global normative role; commitment to evidence; an ability to convene government representatives, scientific experts and other stakeholders; and a regionalized structure that facilitates cooperation with countries. Decision-making is to be guided by the principles of quality, impact and inclusiveness in order to achieve the strategy goals that cut across national, regional and global levels, and across all parts of WHO.

A plan is to be drawn up for implementing the strategy over a 10-year period. The strategy has already served as a framework for formulating workplans for the WHO regions, some of which are developing their own regional research strategies, and it is being incorporated into operational arrangements and workplans for WHO headquarters. In discussion with WHO Member States, implementation plans will also be integrated into country cooperation strategies. In addition, the strategy has been used to inform the creation of specific research agendas, including those on influenza, child health (in support of Millennium Development Goal 4), tuberculosis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in resource-limited settings, radiation risk assessment in medical exposures, and the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.

As this publication was being prepared, research priorities were being mapped and tools for good research practice were being developed. Data on research associated with WHO during the period 2006–2009 are being made available

through a research portal to facilitate coordination and management of research in WHO. A public access policy for WHO is being developed to expand the dissemination and use of WHO publications. In addition, a code of good research practice will strengthen and improve the quality of research practice within WHO.

The WHO strategy on research for health took several years to prepare and builds on more than half a century of expertise in global public health research in WHO. Chapter 2 explains how the strategy was developed and outlines the intensive consultation process that took place. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the strategy and draws attention to its main features. Chapter 4 contains the text of the strategy itself, as approved by the 193 Member States of WHO. The annexes contain the text of WHO governing body resolutions that are relevant to the strategy, as well as the statements of international meetings on research for health.

As the strategy is phased in and the actions to achieve its goals get under way, an evaluation framework will guide the monitoring of those actions and the evaluation of the strategy's impact. Regular reports will be submitted to WHO and to the World Health Assembly.

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