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National health priorities and oral health research in Peru: an articulated framework for scientific and health development

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In 2021, a joint effort was made by the National Institute of Health (INS, by its Spanish acronym) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MINSA, by its Spanish acronym) and oral health researchers and specialists in Peru (1). This initiative resulted in a document promulgated through Ministerial Resolution No. 262-2022/MINSA (2), which approved the *National Oral Health Research Priorities 2022-2026*. The annex of this resolution outlines twelve priorities grouped into three strategic objectives aimed at promoting and engaging the academic environment and researchers in generating scientific evidence related to oral health. Apart from that, it serves as a guide for decision-makers to plan and implement public policies in the country.

Currently, we have the *National Health Priorities 2024-2030* proposed by the National Health Council (CNS, by its Spanish acronym) in collaboration with the National Center for Epidemiology, Prevention and Disease Control (CDC Peru). These priorities were approved on March 13, 2024 through Ministerial Resolution No. 184-2024/MINSA (3), which proposed “policies that involve intersectoral and social coordination to reduce the incidence of non-communicable and communicable diseases.” The methodology for this process began with the technological support of artificial intelligence. Subsequently, the CNS continued with the design and evaluation of the instrument, identifying and integrating the main issues, which were then assessed and grouped into three dimensions: i) diseases and damages, ii) health services, and iii) living and working conditions. The final list of proposed national health priorities ranks dental diseases in thirteenth place within the first dimension, based on criteria such as magnitude, trend, severity, community interest, and intervention capacity.

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In this context, the INS, in September 2024, based on the *National Health Priorities 2024-2030*, began identifying and formulating the *National Health Research Lines, 2024-2030*. This initiative aims to ensure that research aligns with health needs, promoting a structured and evidence-based approach to address key public health challenges and assist the healthcare system (4).

The *National Health Priorities and Research Lines* contribute to the implementation of public policies by the Peruvian government, addressing the healthcare sector in general and, specifically, focusing on oral health. Both priorities—health and research—are complemented by existing oral health documentation.

From the perspective of oral health care

We have access to the *Global Strategy and Action Plan on Oral Health 2023-2030* from the World Health Organization (WHO) (5), which outlines the global oral health agenda for 2030. This strategy is based on the following documents:

1. The World Health Assembly resolution on oral health, WHA74.5 (6), adopted in 2021, where Member States recognize the urgency of shifting from the traditional curative approach to a preventive one, which is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically with SDG 3: “Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.”
2. The *Global Strategy on Oral Health* (7), WHA75(11), adopted in 2022, outlines six strategic objectives: (i) oral health governance; (ii) oral health promotion and prevention of oral diseases; (iii) health workforce; (iv) oral healthcare; (v) oral health information system; and (vi) oral health research agendas.
3. The *World Action Plan on Oral Health 2023-2030* (8), WHA76(9), adopted in 2023, based on the Delphi method, had the participation of WHO experts and collaborating global centers within the Global Framework for Oral Health Surveillance. It presents two overall targets for 2030: (i) “80% of the world’s population will have access to essential oral health care services”; and (ii) “The global combined prevalence of major oral diseases and conditions during lifetime will experience a relative reduction of 10%.”

It is important to mention that each of the six strategic objectives of the *Global Strategy on Oral Health* presents

two global goals, which are supposed to be achieved through partnerships among Member States, the WHO secretariat, international partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector. At the same time, each goal includes a basic indicator that will enable the measurement of compliance with the established strategic objective after 2030 and will be across 194 Member States.

From the perspective of oral health research

There are similar initiatives in other countries such as Canada (9) and Iran (10), which give us other perspectives on how to approach oral health research within the public health framework according to its context. In our nation, we have the *National Oral Health Research Priorities 2022-2026* (2), approved in 2022 and discussed at the beginning of this document.

Consequently, improvement of oral health is in charge of everyone, that is, of the Government, as the guarantor of health for every human being; of the researcher, who relies on health needs to generate scientific evidence and grants it to decision-makers; of health professionals, whether dental surgeons or others who provide health care—in public and/or private health settings—; as well as of individuals themselves along with their caregiver accordingly. Therefore, we all collectively form part of a chain of responsibilities aimed at achieving optimal oral health for Peruvians.

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