



# 2013 Geneva Declaration on Person-centered Health Research



*Emerging from the 6<sup>th</sup> Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine and the International College of Person-centered Medicine (ICPCM)*

We, participants in the 6th Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine, forward this call to improve person-centered health for all by raising global awareness of the need for more research in person-centered medicine (PCM) (seen more broadly as person-centered health) as well as by making general health research more person-centered. This call for action follows the 2012 Geneva Declaration on Person-centered Care for Chronic Diseases.

PCM is a holistic, multidisciplinary and relational perspective aimed at promoting the highest attainable level of health both for individuals and people collectively. PCM encompasses a wide range of concepts, tasks, technologies and practices which aim to place the whole person in context at the center and as the goal of clinical practice and public health. To this effect, PCM articulates science and humanism for a bio-psycho-socio-cultural understanding of health and for the undertaking of health care actions from individual interventions to general health policy.

Respect for the autonomy, dignity and responsibility of each person is an embedded ethical principle of health and healthcare. The WHO definition of health focuses on the complete physical, mental, and social well-being of a person. This and the WHO's historical efforts to advance health make clear that health care can hardly be optimized for individual persons unless it is promoted for people in society as a whole. Countries with marked social inequity tend to have greater morbidity and lower longevity. The pursuit of individual well-being is rendered illusory in the absence of collective well-being. The increasing specialization, technicalization and commoditization of medical care has often had a negative impact on the clinician–patient relationship and has accentuated neglect of patients' personal needs and concerns. Such failures have also tended to perpetuate the burdens of unhealthy life styles that underlie today's burgeoning epidemic of chronic disease. Efforts to advance medicine by exclusively focusing on individualized genomic profiles and related innovative biological techniques for diagnosis and treatment may squander the potential of these breakthroughs if they are not accompanied by systematic attention to the psychological and social aspects of both ill health and positive health as well as to the interests, values and human rights of patients and all other persons involved in healthcare. By articulating a range of sound scholarly perspectives and promoting engagement and partnerships among patients, families and health professionals, PCM may offer a comprehensive conceptual and procedural umbrella for the optimization of health.

At the same time, PCM will be advanced by an increasingly solid research base for purposes of full implementation in regular practice and shaping health policy accordingly. To this effect, we have identified the following *priority research lines and areas*:

- Conceptual, terminological and ontological clarification and refinement of PCM and of its relations to other relevant perspectives and fields.
- Studying scientifically the complexity of health, including illness and disability as well as functioning, resilience, resources, and wellbeing, plus experiences of health and contributors to health. Helpful for

such enterprise may be philosophical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural studies. Developmental and life course perspectives in PCM should also be studied with special attention to gender and age groups (for example, children and elderly people) and to other vulnerable groups.

- Clinical communication research, including reciprocal understanding, empathy, engagement, information exchange as well as greater proficiency in using communication to advance the process and outcome of care
- Exploring and validating new diagnostic models, guides and assessment instruments that not only identify and classify illnesses and related problems but also assess positive health and serve as adequate and effective informational bases for understanding clinical situations and planning care collaboratively among clinicians, patients and families.
- Investigating the principles and procedures of comprehensive person-centered health care, including empowerment, procedural, pharmaceutical, psychotherapeutic, educational, and supportive approaches aimed at the treatment of illness and its amelioration and prevention, as well as rehabilitation and health promotion; and the development and evaluation of guides to facilitate their implementation.
- Studying the principles and procedures of person- and people-centered public health, including the design, evaluation, implementation, costs and impact assessment of services and policies.
- Research on person-centered education and training, including curriculum development and evaluation, design of student-centered experiences and activities, pedagogic processes, and assessment of the impact of these efforts on preparing health professionals as whole persons responsive to society's needs.
- To enhance the knowledge base on PCM through the *International Journal of Person Centered Medicine* and other relevant publications and the systematic analysis of the corresponding literature.
- Organization of scientific events such the ongoing *Geneva Conferences on Person-centered Medicine* and emerging international congresses for the generation, presentation and discussion of new knowledge and to promote productive networking, bridging and interaction among scholars and other health stakeholders.
- Developing an internet-based informational platform and substructures to support PCM activities and research, such as workgroup efforts and inter-institutional and scholarly collaboration.

In order to advance person-centered health research, the ICPCM commits itself to conducting the above listed research-related activities and calls on other similarly-minded scholarly societies, health professional associations, educational institutions, and governmental and inter-governmental organizations to collaborate effectively on research aimed at enhancing person- and people-centered health and quality of life across the world.