

Note of OECD Forum Ministerial Round Table

The Contribution of Research and Innovation Systems to improving the performance of Health Systems

Chair Dr Julio Frenk

Introductory Speaker Dr Andrew von Eschenbach

The panel benefited from the participation of representatives of various sectors, including governments, industry, union representatives, and non-governmental organisations. Dr. von Eschenbach's stimulating presentation highlighted how new biomedical technologies present us with a "magic moment" whereby the war against cancer can be made winnable; yet to succeed, available health care resources need to be redeployed in a more efficient manner and much greater collaboration and cooperation is required across the health system on research and on delivery. At the same time, ways need to be found to develop such partnerships to make the application of these advances available rapidly to those who need them. Consequently, the challenge for OECD countries is to provide an effective enabling environment to stimulate research and translate it into best practice through innovation.

Participants commented on the problems and obstacles to address this challenge, including the perception that governments are often not doing enough despite their high valuation of innovation in health technology; the deterioration of public investment in science education and basic research; the impact on the dissemination of research and innovation of price controls on pharmaceuticals, among others.

Although no answers can be provided at this point to solve these issues, it is worth highlighting some elements mentioned yesterday which may be helpful to direct future discussions on the subject. These include: the recognition of the existing links between innovation, productivity, health and wealth; the need to ensure that allocation mechanisms, including incentive schemes, yield the greatest value for money; the need to reinforce the role of education within the R&D process and promote a critical mass through research institutions; the recognised need to reward innovation and understand that it is an international commodity that requires international cooperation and the development of new partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry, particularly when dealing with threats such as bioterrorism; the need to use a systems-wide approach to efficiently capture effective technologies, and the need to leave behind silo mentalities that restrict the uptake and use of cost-effective technologies; the need to extend research into areas such as behavioural change as a key element to change lifestyles and health systems organisation; and the need to include patient's perspectives when defining health research priorities.

Finally, participants indicated that they saw this dialogue as the beginning of a new process of partnership and that further OECD work on these health related issues would be welcomed.