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NEWS

WHO ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH

Since its inception in 1948, WHO has had close links with medical research and in 1959 the Advisory Committee on Medical Research (ACMR) was established to provide the Organization with scientific advice relating to its various research programmes. The work of this group of top-level international scientists, whose members serve for four years and have included many Nobel Prize winners, has thus continued for over a quarter of a century.

In 1986 the group was renamed the Advisory Committee on Health Research (ACHR), the change in name reflecting added emphasis on health protection and promotion without, however, neglecting the importance of strictly medical research. Health systems research, for example, gives practical support to the strategy of Health for All by the year 2000 and enhances the value to society of prevention, planning and optimal use of available resources.

The Regional Advisory Committees on Health

Research work through each of the six WHO Regional Offices. The global ACHR has the complex task of coordinating their activities. Despite inevitable differences between regions and between countries, the common aim is to focus on research where it will result in the most rapid advance towards the goal of Health for All.

The newly named ACHR met in Geneva in October 1986. One of the matters discussed was the transfer of technology among countries whose needs for health technology, the available resources, and the sociocultural situations differ widely; the Committee therefore strongly recommended that each country should evaluate new health technologies before they are introduced. The evaluation must take into account not only technical efficiency but also such matters as cost, relative priority, and acceptability by the population. (*World Health Forum*, 1987, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 117; World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland).

MICROBES TO TACKLE PLANT DISEASE

Pests have a remarkable ability to become resistant to the chemicals used to control them. Developing new formulations is costly, and there are many questions about their effects on the environment and on food. In this context biological control of disease is gaining favour ecologically and economically. Future crop systems may well benefit

from research at Bristol University using one micro-organism to fight another already in the soil and introducing mixed species of plants. (*Spectrum*, No. 205/ 1987/2; *Spectrum British Science News*; British Information Service, British High Commission, New Delhi 110 021).