

# *Global information dissemination and health*

APLIC Meeting, Boston, 30 March 2004

**Neil Pakenham-Walsh MD**  
health@inasp.info  
www.inasp.info/health



# Outline

- 1. INASP and INASP-Health**
- 2. Position paper for WHO: What information do healthcare providers need? How is it produced? What next?**
- 3. Global review: Increasing access to knowledge for better health**
- 4. Invitation to take part in process**

# INASP

- **International NGO**
- **Aim: to improve access to scientific information and knowledge in developing and transitional countries**
- **Established 1992 by International Council for Science**

# INASP Objectives

- 1. to map, support and strengthen *existing* activities being carried out by others**
- 2. to identify, encourage and support *new* initiatives**
- 3. to promote in-country *capacity building* in information production, organisation, access and dissemination**

# **INASP Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI): Objectives**

- 1. Free and low-cost access to international journals**
- 2. Access to journals from developing countries (eg African Journals OnLine)**
- 3. Training in ICTs (eg Internet travelling workshop)**
- 4. Training for publishers**

# INASP-Health

- Promotes international cooperation to meet the information needs of healthcare providers
- Fosters a global ‘community of interest’: a loose network of over 1000 organizations worldwide:
- “Working together to improve access to reliable, relevant information for health professionals in developing and transitional countries”

“Providing **access to reliable information** for health workers in developing countries is potentially the single most **cost-effective** and **achievable** strategy for **sustainable** improvement in health care.”

*British Medical Journal* 1997; 314: 90

# A global 'community of interest'

Healthcare providers, librarians, publishers, researchers, trainers, technologists, economists, anthropologists...

(anyone with an interest: public sector, private sector, civil society...)



# Development of INASP-Health

- 1994: BMJ Conference 'Getting health information to developing countries'
- 1996: Launch of INASP-Health
- 1998: Health Information Forum
- 2000: 'HIF-net at WHO' email forum
- 2002: INASP Health Links
- 2004: WHO Position paper/Global Review

# Towards evidence-based healthcare (1)



## **Evidence-based healthcare**

What choice to make in this particular case?

What treatment choices are available?

What diagnostic resources are available?

History/clinical examination

## **Knowledge of healthcare provider**



Access to relevant, reliable information

# Towards evidence-based healthcare (2)

**Knowledge of healthcare provider**

Access to relevant, reliable information

Publication of locally relevant materials

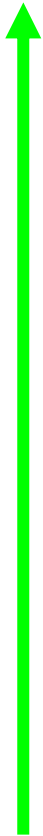
Generic materials

Systematic reviews

Indexes

Publication of original research

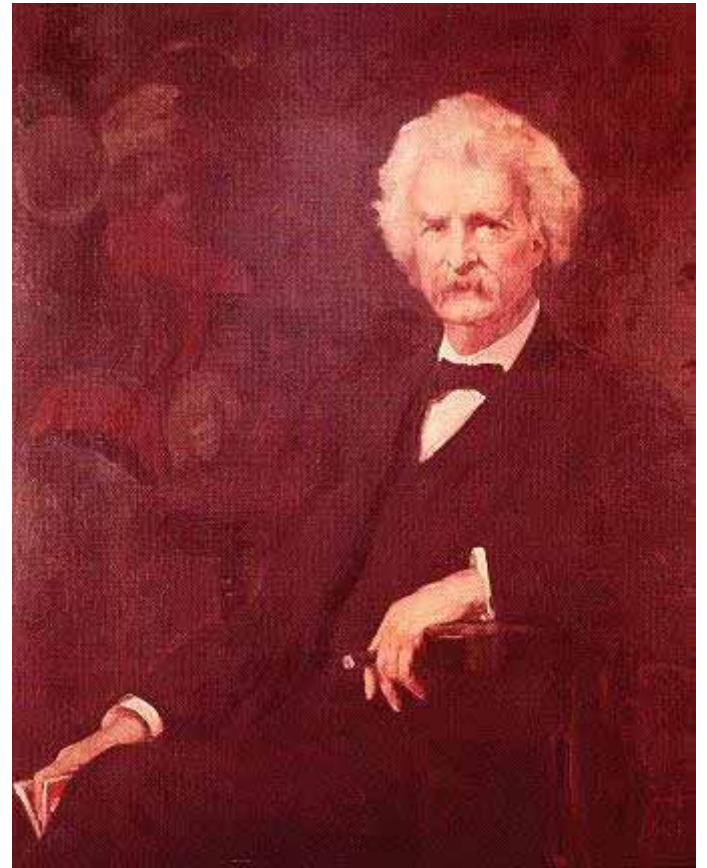
Original research



# Reliability...

“Be careful reading books about health; you might die of a misprint.”

Mark Twain



## ...reliability

“The medical literature can be compared to a jungle. It is fast growing, full of dead wood, sprinkled with hidden treasure and infested with spiders and snakes.”

*Peter Morgan, Scientific Editor,  
Canadian Medical Association*

## Relevance...

“Despite the plethora of health information on the Internet, very little is directly suitable for dissemination to poor communities as it is. It needs to be repackaged to ensure local suitability and relevance.”

AfriAfya, c/o AMREF, Kenya, 2002

## ...relevance...

Examples:

- Medium: website? book?
- Choice of language: English?  
Swahili?
- Use of language: academic? simple?

# ...relevance

## Examples (continued)

- Images: generic? locally specific?
- Approach: theoretical? practical?
- Resources: CT scan? clinical examination?



# Position Paper for WHO

- Purpose: Partners Forum, London, April 2004 ---> World Summit on health Research, Mexico City, November 2004
- Authors: Fiona Godlee, Neil Pakenham-Walsh, Dan Ncayiyana, Barbara Cohen, Abel Packer

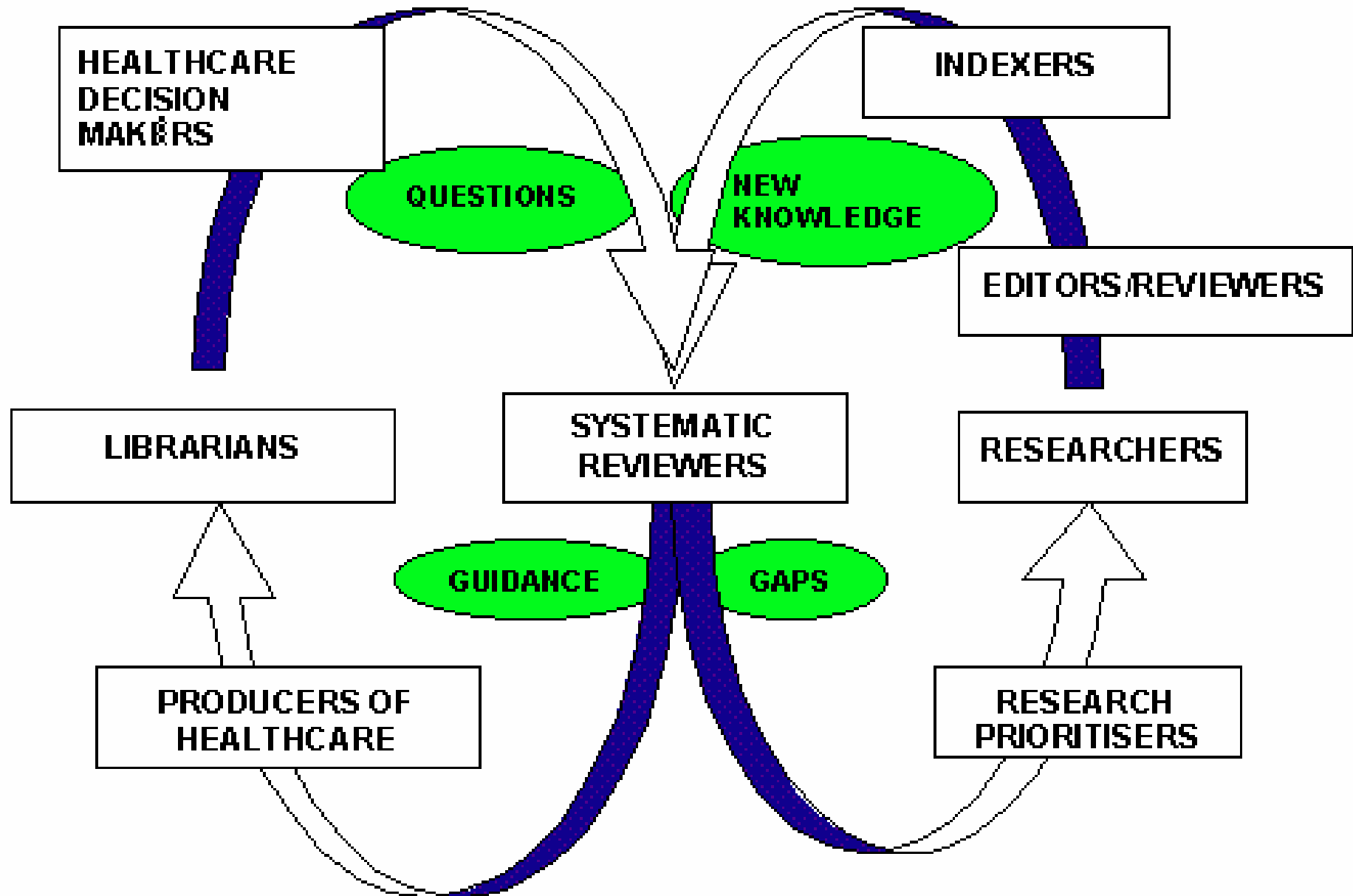
# Position Paper for WHO: Key points 1/2

- Most healthcare providers in developing countries continue to lack access to the information they need to deliver the best possible healthcare with available resources.
- Progress
- Lessons learned

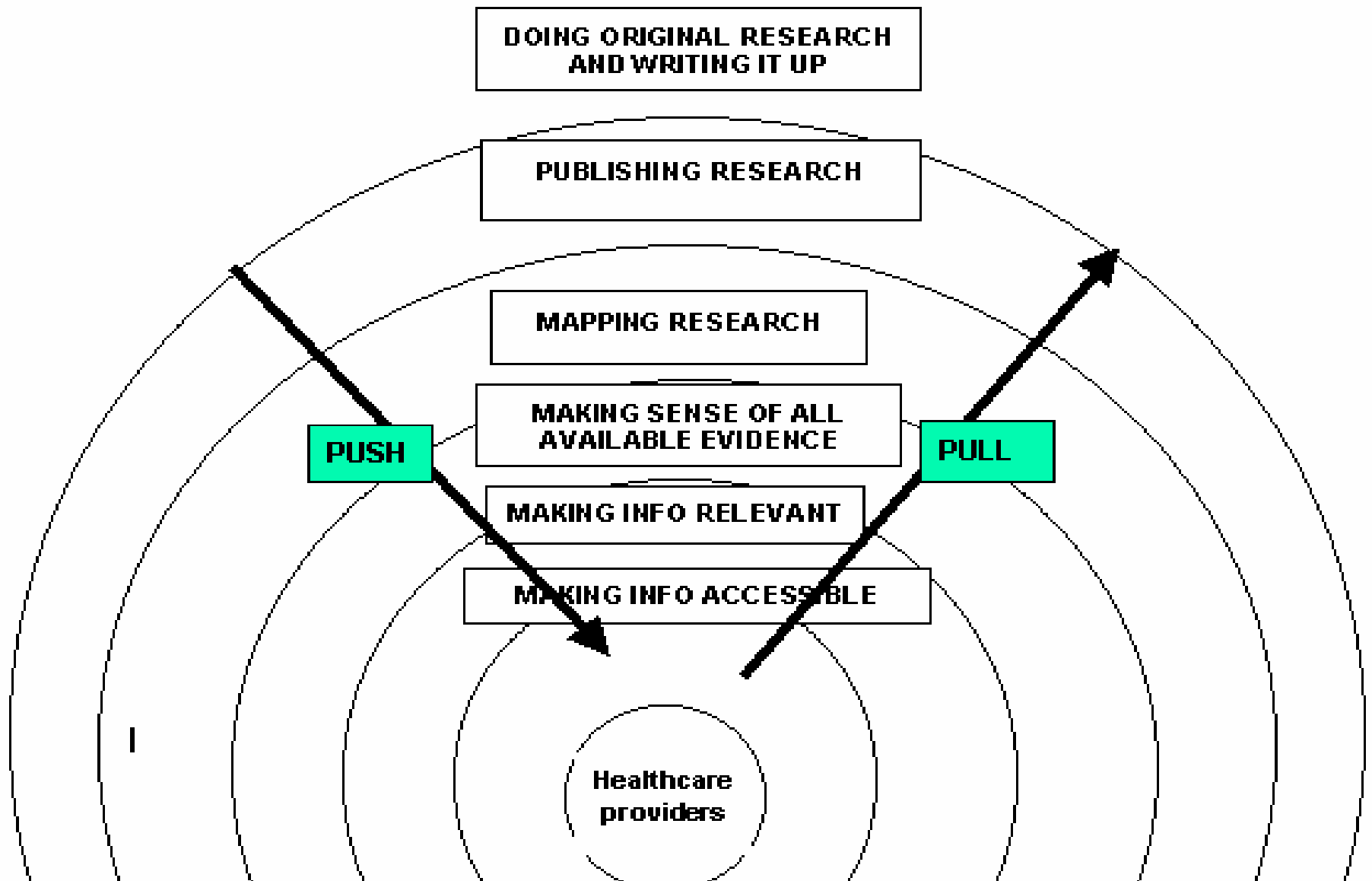
# Position Paper for WHO: Key points 2/2

- **Universal access to health info by 2015**
  1. Researching information needs and barriers to use of information.
  2. Providing access to existing materials for healthcare providers in developing countries;
  3. Providing access to the results of research;
  4. Improving relevance and usability of materials for healthcare providers in developing countries;
  5. Improving reliability and currency of materials for healthcare providers in developing countries;
  6. Improving internet and e mail connectivity;
  7. Skills development and training.
- **Global review of health information access**

**Figure 1: Healthcare knowledge "figure of eight"**



**Figure 2: PUSH and PULL**



[www.inasp.info/health/](http://www.inasp.info/health/)

Neil Pakenham-Walsh

[health@inasp.info](mailto:health@inasp.info)

Tel: 01865 248124



**International Network**

**INASP**

---

for the Availability of Scientific Publications

# **‘HIF-net at WHO’**

## **Email discussion list**

**“I subscribe to many lists. This is probably the most elegant and most informative.”**

**Dr Najeeb Al-Shorbaji, Director of Information, WHO  
Eastern Mediterranean Office**

**Join now!**

**health@inasp.info**

Working together to improve access to  
health information:

## **Health Information Forum**

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004, 3-5pm

British Medical Association, London

‘Leapfrog technologies: the potential  
of handheld computers and mobile  
phones for health professionals in  
developing countries’