

Bringing international collaboration to your doorstep.

Llevando la colaboración internacional a su puerta.

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International cooperation is essential to address complex problems that go beyond national borders, and requires us to engage individually to ensure its success. Complex challenges like migration, climate change and emerging diseases require thinking beyond our borders. These challenges require a high level of international cooperation to share information and coordinate actions with governments, non-governmental organizations, private companies, universities among others. International cooperation is a means to channel innovative ideas and new resources to optimize our health system processes. We have many recent examples to prove the benefit of Peru's international collaboration.

During the pandemic, collaborators from China, Japan and the United States provided support through donations of ambulances, equipment and biomedical supplies complementing the Ministry of Health's efforts to respond to the pandemic and aiding in the recovery of the health system. This is a clear example with direct impact on the Peruvian population and media exposure. While these benefits were valuable and meaningful to Peru, the work to cultivate international collaboration persistently is often more foundational, and unfortunately less visible to policy makers, medical professionals and the general public.

We also benefit from projects less visible to the public, but critical to strengthen our core health system. For example, in digital health, Korean cooperation supports improvements to the efficiency of health spending through better data management in the country's largest insurance system, the Comprehensive Health System (Sistema Integral de Salud), or SIS. The experiences and standards shared by Korea are driving improvement of the infrastructure, audit systems and data storage for the invoicing of health benefits with the use of international standards. As a next step, we are collaborating on improvements in telemedicine platform management, which will ensure efficient and safe use of this technology to reach our most remote communities [1].

Likewise, collaboration with Germany expedited development of vaccination record systems with offline synchronization for remote border communities with difficult access and poor network coverage. This will improve information on vaccination coverage, addressing known issues of under-registration and the future challenges of interoperability of records between neighboring countries [2]. The complexities of serving remote border communities are compounded by geopolitical dynamics and often means these vulnerable populations being insufficiently represented or inconsistently captured in the data used for decision-making. We hope that this effort will be a regional health benefit leveraged by other countries with similar circumstances.

Another important program is Peru's participation in the "One Health" collaborative framework on health security, recognizing the dependency between human, animal and environmental health. Current collaboration under this framework with the United States [3], Korea and the World Bank provides technical and financial support to strengthen epidemiological surveillance at both the national and regional levels, like in Loreto. The outcome will enhance epidemiological surveillance, response capacity and compliance with International Health Regulations (IHR). In this case, the participation of our partners is not only critical for the construction of infrastructure and acquiring equipment, but also laying the foundation for new collaborative global networks.

Improving our integrated health networks remains one of Peru's greatest challenges. Our vision is to strengthen primary care focused on the person, family and community, providing services spanning preventive to palliative care. This vision is shared with the Inter-American Development Bank [4], the European Union, French and Spanish [5] partners who continuously provide the Ministry of Health with technical and financial support. Support comes not only from foreign governments, but also from major efforts through multilateral cooperation. Well established multilateral channels include the World Health Organization (WHO) and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), who contribute with a wide variety of technical assistance. Other influential multilateral engagements include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), both of which have been actively involved for several years.

Peru's participation as host of APEC 2024 reinforced the importance of health in all aspects of economic development. Our commitment to International Collaboration for health is recognized in our presidency of the Health Working Group (HWG) 2024-2025, and helped consolidate the promotion of regional initiatives around key priorities such as community mental health, lifelong vaccination, climate change, and gender and health [6]. We are particularly proud of our investment, confirmed in December 2024 and aligned to the 'Empower' APEC campaign, to deliver millions of human papilloma (HPV) vaccines to women in Peru to prevent cervical cancer [7]. Our active participation in APEC forums support the integral position of health in economic, social and environmental resilience.

While Peru's accession to the OECD remains in process, it is important to highlight what it implies in practical terms. Adopting measurable performance targets for our health system will put our advances and challenges into perspective. These measures will allow us to benchmark with systems that demonstrate proven levels of resilience, and develop a comprehensive understanding of well-being [8]. This can strengthen evidence-based decision-making, and quickly identify drivers of best practice as learning opportunities for public policies that work. Building the conditions to benchmark our practices to identify strengths and opportunities is essential to unconventional innovation in times of high volatility. While policy will rely on political leadership and decision making in their vision, the new performance measures will add value by establishing a strong foundation of data to inform actions and public policies. These measures will also enable global exposure and comparison with other economies to better understand our position, clearly understand alternative models, provide context for public policy debates [9], and thus make conscientious choices for our communities.

Our international collaboration benefits local communities and our neighbors, remembering that disease has no geopolitical boundaries. Peru's participation in the international forum, Stop TB Partnership, demonstrates our ability to position the needs of Latin America in the global agenda to fight tuberculosis. At the December 2024 meeting, Stop TB collaborators recognized Peru's innovation in treating multidrug resistant TB (MDR-TB), cutting treatment time to 6 months, and transitioning from injectable drugs to an all-oral regime. Our efforts have put Peru forward as a leading candidate for the board of directors of the Stop TB Partnership [10]. As a board member, our active participation will enable us to continue sharing our innovations and

expertise in treatment schemes, early diagnosis via molecular biology, and use of AI equipment.

I have the privilege of experiencing this type of international collaboration from various perspectives in my career: as a student, a practicing medical doctor, a professor, a researcher, and now as a public servant in Peru. I have also experienced the collaborative process and its benefits firsthand across five continents, and I can conclude from these enriching experiences that remote communities in Peru, Europe, the USA, and Africa share more in common than expected, with much to exchange in addressing the challenges of health security. Peru has a lot of expertise to offer other communities, in addition to what we learn through these exchanges. Our common foundation is the human condition and a shared environment from which borderless health risks evolve. Innovation thrives in response to challenges, a value deeply rooted in Peruvian culture. The more we collaborate and share our innovations, the better positioned we will have to address and overcome health risks yet to come.

International cooperation is essential and directly impacts our local community: think global, act local. All of these projects described are examples of how global initiatives can save lives. Disease respects no borders, and international cooperation is a cornerstone to preventing new global health crises. Active participation in global forums allows us to share knowledge and resources that strengthen our capabilities and better prepares us for future challenges. Let us each support this collaboration from our trenches: as teaching physicians inform the next generation and participate in collaborative research; as managers support your team's active participation in these events. Above all, be change agents in our communities and beyond, exploring and welcoming innovations from global collaboration that contribute to a healthier world.

In 2025, I invite everyone to be agents for change, supporting international collaboration with the global community to drive local impact throughout Peru.

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