

# Identifying Primary Health Care Research Priorities in Underserved Regions of Eastern São Paulo, Brazil:

## A Delphi Study among expert panels at the Santa Marcelina Primary Health Care Network “In-progress”

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Research in primary health care is essential in low- and middle-income countries to reduce health inequalities. Research priority setting is an effective strategy to direct health research and strengthen health care services. Identified priorities can provide direction and focus for future research and direct funding to the most urgent needs. This is especially important in resource limited areas. This study will be conducted in the underserved areas of Eastern São Paulo, Brazil. These regions have major disadvantages including poorer health indicators and socioeconomic indices, greater social inequalities, and a higher poverty index than the São Paulo city average.

**Objectives:** To systematically identify top research priorities through the elicitation and prioritization of primary health care research questions in underserved areas of Eastern São Paulo based on experts knowledge and experience within child and maternal health, communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, mental health, urgent and emergency care, patient safety, and care coordination.

**Methods:** A multi-panelled, three-round Delphi approach will be used to gather expert opinions on important research questions. Each panel of experts will set priorities for a specific domain of primary health care. The questionnaires will be web-based surveys, distributed across health care professionals and administrators of the Santa Marcelina Network. The participants will be recruited through purposeful and snowball sampling. In round one, participants will list important primary health care research questions. In round two, participants will rate the level of importance of each research question on a 5-point Likert scale. In round three, participants will reflect on and revise or maintain their ratings in light of the statistical group response.

**Anticipated results:** A prioritized list of research questions within each of the primary health care domains will be obtained with an assessment of importance for each research question, reflecting the research needs of East São Paulo in rank-order.

**Limitations:** This study will include the views of administrative bodies and health care professionals. A future study will be conducted to engage a community and patient perspective.

**Conclusion:** The primary health care research needs identified by experts will help inform future research in Eastern São Paulo and direct resources to the most essential research needs. This is likely to stimulate high quality research that can have an impact on practice, education, and policy.