

Developing a culture of research in the POGS through the POGS Unified Research Agenda and its flagship research projects

Introduction

It has been recognized that, to help ensure research caters to the needs of society, a research agenda must be set.^[1-3] When a health research agenda is set, it will help prioritize the implementation of health researches that will in turn help improve society's public health system. This way, evidence is provided to help guide policy decisions on health development.^[1,4] Such was the context by which the National Unified Health Research Agenda (NUHRA) was created and has evolved in its three editions. In NUHRA 2017–2022, six themes of priority research were identified. These included responsive health systems, research to enhance and extend healthy lives, holistic approaches to health and wellness, health resiliency, global competitiveness and innovation in health, and research in equity and health.^[1]

The Making of the POGS Unified Research Agenda

In late 2019, after having evaluated many research papers submitted by obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN) residents from the various residency training programs over the years, there were discussions with then President Mario Bernardino about the various ways by which research for the Philippine Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, Inc. (POGS) could be improved. It was mentioned that many of the research papers submitted were clinical research that were simply a fulfillment of a requirement for their training programs or catered only to the institution's needs. The idea of developing a research agenda for the POGS was put forward despite the fact that already there were some identified priority OB-GYN conditions in the NUHRA. At that time, at least two specialty societies were creating their own research agenda and developing one in OB-GYN had never been done before and was, therefore, innovative. Besides, the POGS has a critical and strategic role on improving maternal and child health policy and practice on a national scale.

In 2020, the chair of the Scientific Works Committee under then POGS President Christia Padolina proposed the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee of the POGS Unified Research Agenda (PURA), the acronym chosen

for the PURA. Aligned with the POGS's core values and the six themes of NUHRA, the PURA aims to initiate and develop collaborative research among its stakeholders which will become templates for actionable policies and programs in improving women's health. Specifically, the objectives of the PURA are to: (1) develop a priority list of OB-GYN topics that would serve as a guide in planning future relevant research studies for the next 5 years, (2) involve all stakeholders in OB-GYN health care in the development of the PURA, and (3) monitor the submission of subsequent OB-GYN research studies and their adherence to the PURA. The composition of the Ad Hoc Committee of the PURA mirrored the process by which it was bound to undergo. Representation from the various sectors of the POGS was taken, and these included one each from the government, private, regional, and academic training institutions, plus the Scientific Works chair representing the Board of Trustees (BOT). By such all major stakeholders of the POGS had a voice. By choice, Dr. Maria Lourdes Otayza, chairperson of NUHRA 2017–2022, was appointed chair of the PURA Committee.

Developing the Research Agenda

The road to develop the research agenda of the POGS was not easy, as it had to go through the rigorous path as did NUHRA 2017–2022 [Figures 1 and 2]. The top ten perceived priority research topics among the 86 current residency training programs were collected in the preparatory phase. Data were later collated and results were presented to the different groups of POGS representing the various stakeholders (government, private, regional, academic, and subspecialty sectors) for consultation. After considering all inputs from the various sectors and stakeholders, a draft PURA containing the top 20 topics for priority OB-GYN research [Figure 3] was presented to the Board of Trustees for final approval. These topics of the PURA upon analysis followed the six themes of the NUHRA, assuring alignment of the society's research agenda with that of the national research agenda [Figures 4 and 5]. These were presented to the society in the 2020 annual convention and circulated to its membership. Moreover, as included in its original goals, adherence of the various institutions to the PURA will be monitored periodically.

POGS Flagship Research Projects

In the same year when the PURA was launched, the Scientific Works Committee through the PURA suggested an annual search for certain research studies in OB-GYN worthy to be called a POGS Flagship Research Project. The program was created to inspire OB-GYN stakeholders and to spur relevant, meaningful, and impactful research within the society. Following strict criteria, chosen research studies would be granted a modest study grant of P500,000 over 2 years. Although still in its initial stages, three worthy POGS Flagship

research studies have been awarded since 2020 [Table 1] and more are expected to be chosen in the coming years.

Current Status of Research in the POGS

With these new programs on research, the POGS appears to be on track to level up on route to develop a culture of research. However, it will take more than just setting the society's research agenda and investing on a few flagship research projects to fully imbed this much sought-after achievement. The Ad Hoc Committee of the PURA cannot single-handedly effect this change without the help of the entire society. For residents, consultants may help guide their researches and the CREED may help monitor their adherence to the PURA. The PBOG may renew the accreditation of training programs by recognizing and rewarding compliance. Fellows and diplomates may follow the lead of pioneering local researches after being inspired by studies that directly benefitted them by paying forward with meaningful research projects of their own. Ultimately, "culture" is attained by consistency over an extended period of time and everybody's help is needed for a "culture change."

Acknowledgments

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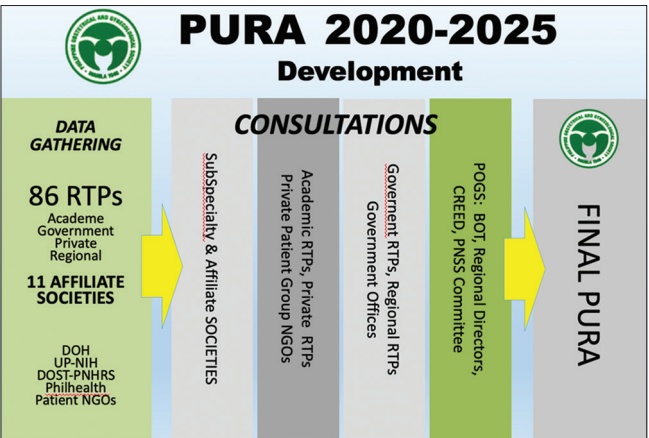


Figure 1: Development of POGS Unified Research Agenda 2020-2025. PURA: POGS Unified Research Agenda

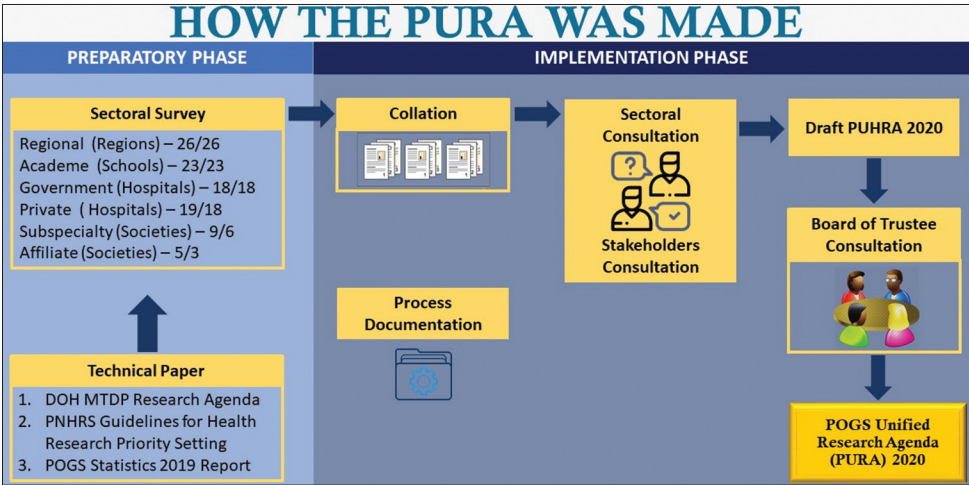


Figure 2: Development scheme for the POGS Unified Research Agenda 2020-2025. PURA: POGS Unified Research Agenda

Table 1: POGS Flagship Research Projects 2020 to present

Year	Title of study	Principal Investigator	Status
2020	Risk factors, clinical characteristics and transmission of COVID-19 in non-pregnant and pregnant women in the Philippines: A multicenter study	Erlidia F. Llamas-Clark, MD, PhD	Completed and published
2021	Blood transfusion in elective gynecologic and obstetrical surgeries: A multicenter study	Maria Antonia Esteban-Habana, MD, MSc	Data collection complete; ongoing paper writing
2022	Evaluation of bisphenols on maternal and fetal compartment tissue samples of pregnant Filipino women, and the effect on epigenetic patterns and transcriptions	Melissa D. Amosco, MD, PhD	Ongoing data collection

POGS: Philippine Obstetrical and Gynecological Society

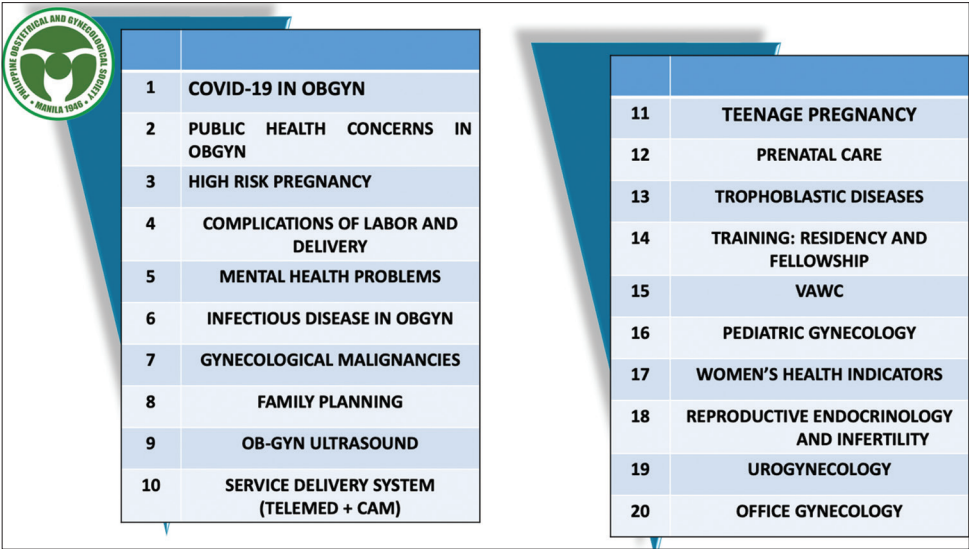


Figure 3: Top 20 priority areas for research in OB-GYN in the POGS. OB-GYN: Obstetrics and gynecology

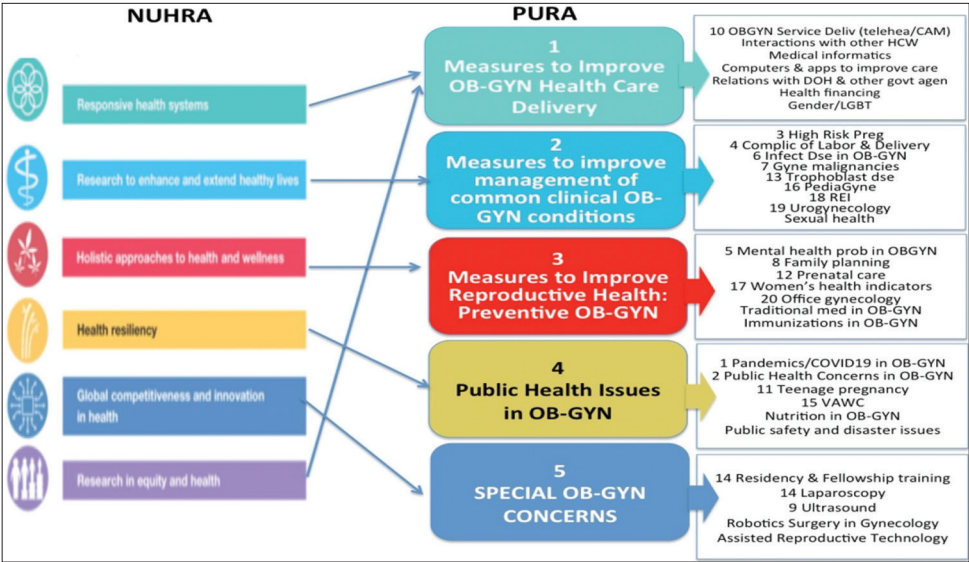


Figure 4: Alignment of POGS Unified Research Agenda with National Unified Health Research Agenda 2017–2022. NUHRA: National Unified Health Research Agenda, PURA: POGS Unified Research Agenda

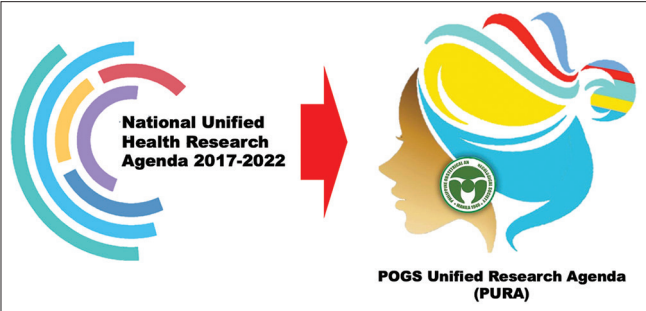


Figure 5: Concordance of the National Unified Health Research Agenda with the PURA: POGS Unified Research Agenda

training programs representing its various sectors, the subspecialty and affiliate societies, representatives from the DOH, PhilHealth, and the Philippine Council

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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