



MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN HEALTH POLICIES IN ROMANIA: COMBINING EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND MEDICAL PRACTICE

The University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" of Bucharest organized on Thursday, October 3, 2024, in hybrid format, the Roundtable "MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN ROMANIAN HEALTH POLICIES: BRIDGING EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND MEDICAL PRACTICE", an event organized within the framework of the Alliance4Life project Bridging the Research and Innovation Gap in Life Sciences (A4L_BRIDGE).

The Alliance4Life Bridging the Research and Innovation Gap in Life Sciences (A4L_BRIDGE) project aims to increase competitiveness and innovation capacity, while pursuing the implementation of the institutional reforms needed to facilitate the translation of health research results into biomedical applications useful to society.

A Strategic Initiative for Bridging the Gap in European Health Research and Innovation, the Alliance for Life Consortium brings together 12 leading institutions and universities from 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania), with the aim of bridging the gap in European health research and innovation. The "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Bucharest became a partner in 2021, through the project "Bridging the gap between research and innovation in the European Union", which was finalized earlier this year.

The event highlighted the barriers and challenges of interconnecting medical research, teaching and practice in academic health institutions. The event also highlighted the need to develop concrete recommendations for policy and practice at both institutional and national levels, as well as the importance of collaboration and networking between participants to facilitate ongoing dialogue and build strategic partnerships in the development of medical research, education and practice at the academic level.

This event brought to the forefront the approaches of the new European Research Area and its impact on academic health institutions with the participation of high-level health policy, education and research experts:

- Prof. Dr. Alexandru Rafila - Minister of Health,
- Ligia Deca - Minister of Education,
- Prof. Dr. Adrian Streinu-Cercel – President of the Commission for Public Health, Romanian Senate,

- Prof. Univ. Dr. Andrei Alexandru - State Secretary, Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization,
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Diana Păun - Presidential Advisor, Presidential Administration, Public Health Department,
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Adriana Pistol - State Secretary, Ministry of Health.

Having in view that clinical and translational research is usually organized in university hospitals, where both medical and teaching activities are carried out in a clinical setting, the event focused on topics of interest, structured as follows:

- PANEL 1 - Time dedicated to medical research and education
- PANEL 2 - Institutional integration of research and teaching in teaching hospitals
- PANEL 3 - Innovations in medical and digital technologies

During the three panels, the rectors of the following Romanian universities presented both successful models in the three areas and the problems they face:

- Prof. Univ. Dr. Leonard Azamfirei - Rector, University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology "George Emil Palade" Tg.Mureş
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Viorel Scripcariu - Rector, University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Grigore T. Popa" Iaşi
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Mihnea Costoiu - Rector, Polytechnic University of Bucharest
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Cristian Gheonea - Prorector for Academic Management, University of Medicine and Pharmacy Craiova
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Mihaela Felicia Băciuş - Scientific Prorector, University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Iuliu Haţieganu" Cluj-Napoca
- Prof. Univ. Dr. Bogdan Timar - Dean, Faculty of Medicine, "Victor Babeş" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timişoara

Managers of the most prestigious university hospitals were present and actively participated in this round table: "Sf. Ioan" Emergency Clinical Hospital Bucharest, National Institute for Mother and Child Health "Alessandrescu-Rusescu", Bucharest Emergency Hospital Floreasca, Institute of Pneumophthiology "Marius Nasta" together with members of patient organizations.

In addition to the Romanian speakers - representatives of traditional Romanian Universities of Medicine and Pharmacy, hospitals, as well as representatives of health and education authorities, the Round Table was attended by Jiří Nantl, former deputy minister of education for the Czech Republic and director of the Central European Research Institute at Masaryk University, architect of the Alliance for Life, who spoke about new approaches to European research and education policies. He was one of the main authors of the Education Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic and contributed to the preparation of changes in university legislation and implementation of new models of support for research quality of universities. Also international speaker was Prof. Dr. Nada Čikeš, from the University of Medical Sciences in Zagreb, who presented the results of the analysis carried out in the framework of the previous project Alliance for Life Sciences (Alliance4Life_ACTION): White Paper on Combining Research, Teaching and Medical Practice.

"When we talk about evolution and progress in healthcare, we are also talking about the main pillars of the academic performance, namely: highly qualified human resources, top technologies, advanced scientific research projects, digitalization and, more recently, the application of artificial intelligence, modern or ultramodern medical centers, and the list goes on. And in order to meet these performance criteria, we are always conditioned by the same sensitive subject, which is sustainable medium- and long-term investment programs that provide predictability in the development of any area of activity. I believe that this chapter must always be based and developed on the prioritization principle. This is why I reiterate that education, research and especially health must be real priorities in the evolution, progress and not least in the security and safety of any nation", said Prof. Dr. Viorel Jinga, Rector of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Carol Davila" in Bucharest.

"We have taken several steps that will support and encourage young people to choose to continue their studies here at home, towards a research career. Scholarships for PhD students have been increased to 3,200 lei per month since last academic year. We will soon launch the third edition of the call for scholarships for master's and doctoral studentships, postdoctoral fellowships and research stays abroad. The scholarships are now worth between €1,100 and €1,200 per month, depending on the country of destination", minister Deca said at the round table.

She recalled that among the concerns of the Ministry of Education to support the efforts of universities to participate in such programs are the increase in the number of doctoral graduates in relation to the number of university graduates, the participation of Romanian universities in alliances of European universities to access research funds in a more competitive way, the modernization of the infrastructure of universities and their digitalization. "I expect medical students to be among the first to accept that modern technologies and artificial intelligence can improve and even transform the medical act. UMF 'Carol Davila' has understood that we need to adapt our educational offer to the new demands of the market (...) Universities have a role in creating essential knowledge to face contemporary global challenges, and public health and technological advancement remain catalysts of innovation. By improving collaboration with the labor market, with society, academics act as a catalyst for innovation, putting discoveries from medical research into practice," Deca said.

"The gaps are very often measured in the performance that is achieved especially by those who have research activities and especially by the fact that clinical research, even basic research, has to be translated into practice. The big step that we could take concerns precisely the applicability that these research projects could have in the future. The Ministry of Health is concerned with developing a number of lines of action in the field of research, and I will refer first of all to clinical trials, amending the legislation on clinical trials and, last but not least, developing partnerships to make progress possible," minister of health said. He recalled about the operationalization of the innovation hub through which Romanian universities of medicine and pharmacy have partnered with a strong group of pharmaceutical companies.