

Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus Nicaragua April 24 to 30, 2005: Trip Report

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About RPM Plus

The Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (cooperative agreement HRN-A-00-00-00016-00), works in more than 20 developing countries to provide technical assistance to strengthen drug and health commodity management systems. The program offers technical guidance and assists in strategy development and program implementation both in improving the availability of health commodities—pharmaceuticals, vaccines, supplies, and basic medical equipment—of assured quality for maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, and family planning and in promoting the appropriate use of health commodities in the public and private sectors.

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Abstract

This report summarizes discussions between Maria Miralles, RPM Plus Deputy Director, and key partners and collaborators during the week of April 24, 2005 in Managua in regard to future technical and financial support from RPM Plus toward improved management and use of pharmaceuticals in Nicaragua. A draft workplan was developed based on these conversations.

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| CIPS | Centro de Insumos Para la Salud |
| COIME | Association of nongovernmental organizations that conduct activities involving medications |
| COP | Chief of Party |
| CPNM | Comisión Política Nacional de Medicamentos (National Political Commission for Medicines) |
| HAI | Health Action International |
| LAC | Latin America and Caribbean |
| MINSA | Ministerio de Salud (Ministry of Health) |
| PAHO | Pan American Health Organization |
| RPM Plus | Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure |
| SIMINSA | Sistema Informática del Ministerio de Salud (MOH Information System) |
| STG | Standard Treatment Guideline |
| VSM | Venta Social de Medicamento |

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Background

RPM Plus has received support from USAID/Nicaragua to provide technical assistance in pharmaceutical management since 2002. RPM plus has been providing assistance to the Comisión Política Nacional de Medicamentos (CPNM), a commission that oversees the progress on the modification of the Drug Policy and Drug Legislation (Ley de Medicamentos y Farmacias), and the approval of the new Legislation by the General Assembly (Congress) regarding the expansion of the not-for profit drug outlets program (Ventas Sociales). RPM Plus has also been working with the CPNM to evaluate the procurement, warehousing and distribution of essential medicines. RPM Plus completed a comparative study of two distribution systems in 2004 and the results were discussed with the Vice Minister of Health and her technical team. A decision was made at the time (September 2004) to promote the reorganization of the main warehouse and delivery system through the current process of reorganization (reform) of the Ministry of Health (MINSa). Working groups were formed to help define the functions of the new CIPS within the context of the overall reorganization of MINSa.

Purpose of Trip

Dr. Maria Miralles, Deputy Director of RPM Plus, visited Nicaragua in order to regroup with partners and counterparts and follow up on the progress made in the reorganization of MINSa, specifically with respect to the supply system for medicines and medical supplies. The purpose of the visit was to identify how the funds remaining from FY04 (approximately US\$142,000) would be used and to propose new activities for the coming year.

Scope of Work

- Meet with partners and counterparts to discuss progress made on streams of activities identified above
- Identify specific opportunities where RPM Plus can provide additional technical support
- Develop a draft workplan for RPM Plus, identifying key areas of work, related activities, and a timeline.

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Activities

An agenda was developed by the CPNM in advance of the visit (Annex 1). The week began (4/25) with an introduction to and overview of the activities carried out and planned by the **CPNM**. The presentation was made by the Director of the CPNM (Dr. Wilfredo Barreto) and Dr. Jesus Blandón. That same afternoon, Dr. Miralles met with other members of the CPNM (Maria Marta Solorzano, Sergio Palacios, Edgar Narvaes, Ethel Palacios, Oscar Aráuz P. Key areas for potential support from RPM Plus that were discussed included:

- Support for the development of standard operating procedures for key functions in the supply chain. This request was made in response to and support of Terms of Reference from PAHO to support a consultant to compile, review and revise existing documents related to the topic. It was determined however, that the support from PAHO could not sustain the full effort required to complete the task.
- A key area of concern (from various persons interviewed), and of immediate need of attention, is the functioning of the system for programming needs.
- Need for continued support to the team, monitoring the appropriate use of documentation and the adherence to standard procedures.
- Promotion of the rational use of medicines.
- Improving the management deficits of the medical store, the weaknesses of the national quality control lab and drug regulatory authority, and the need for an integrated management information system. It was felt that these areas could be addressed after the procedures had been defined and as the corresponding norms are developed.

For Tuesday (4/26), a field visit was planned to the Hospital España in Chinandega to observe the internal controls applied by the providers to rationalize the use of medicines and other medical supplies. Unfortunately, due to strikes about the increase in transportation prices, the vehicle was forced to return to Managua. On the return, however, a visit to a health center in La Paz that runs a “**farmacia de autogestionaria**” on the premises was accomplished. This visit was useful to understand how these types of pharmacies function as well as an example of how the local level drug and therapeutics committees function. As the trip was aborted mid-stream, the group rescheduled another meeting with the Director of **CIPS**, the national medical store, Javier Palacio. This interview and tour of the facility yielded several insights into the issues impacting on the proper programming of needs.

On Wednesday (4/27) Dr. Miralles met with Dr. Maritza Narvaez, Director of the Directorate of Medical Norms (**DNIM**) for MINSa and three other representatives: Juana Obando, Aura Rosa Canelo from the **Reorganization Commission** and Dr. Danilo Yescas, Director General of Administration and Finance (**DGAF**). The constraints caused by the lack of human resources were raised, the problems with quantification, how to manage unwanted donations and products from parallel programs and the practically defunct information system SIMINSA. The afternoon meeting with the Medicines Commission of the National Council on Health was cancelled. Dr. Miralles took advantage of the open time to schedule meetings for later in the week with HAI and PAHO. Progress on this assignment was reported to MSH COP Barry Smith, followed by a

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work session with Drs. Barreto and Blandón to further refine some potential lines of activity for RPM Plus.

On Thursday (4/28) Dr. Miralles, accompanied by Dr. Mario Lacayo (MSH) and Dr. Jesus Blandón (CPNM), visited two “**Ventas Sociales de Medicamentos**”, one in Nandasmo and one in Niquinhomo, run by the John XXIII Foundation, a member of COIME, an association of nongovernmental organizations that conduct activities involving medications. An interview was conducted with Albert Mendoza, medical officer and Edwin P., pharmacist and local manager of the VSM. An interesting issue that came out of the interview was the recognition of the vulnerability of the VSM to accusations of selling cheap, poor quality products. Dr. Miralles was informed that the group conducting joint procurement is interested in developing a quality assurance component for the VSM.

After a final discussion with representatives from the CPNM and the team working on the reorganization of MINSAs, the following list of three potential streams of activities was agreed upon: assistance with the development of standard operating procedures and norms for drug management; specific technical assistance in developing a system for programming needs, and assistance with ensuring that the functions of a central drugs and therapeutics committee are incorporated into the reorganization of efforts and support to address improved drug use in the community, in collaboration with the local HAI group. This was later discussed in further detail with Carlos Fuentes from **HAI** and Carlos Berrios from the **MINSAs Drug Information Center**.

As a follow-up to the above discussions, on Friday (4/29) Dr. Miralles met with Dr. Maria Elena Berríos, Director of **PAHO** in Nicaragua, to discuss the revision of existing terms of reference for a consultant to compile all the relevant MINSAs procedures and norms involved in assuring good supply management of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies as part of the initial effort to prepare manuals of SOPs. PAHO has offered to support four months of the activity; CPNM believes that an additional three months will be required. CPNM has already identified a qualified consultant and the work is ready to begin. Dr. Miralles proposed that RPM Plus both make up the difference, as well as complement the effort by providing specific technical assistance for critical evaluation and suggest revisions accordingly before materials are considered final. In addition, Dr. Miralles confirmed that RPM Plus would be coordinating with PAHO to conduct a workshop in September to teach how to adapt generic Standard Treatment Guidelines for hospital treatment of key infectious diseases through LAC/IDI regional funds and that USAID/RPM Plus Nicaragua Mission funds may be used to ensure adequate participation and follow-up of Nicaraguan participants. In addition, Dr. Berrios mentioned that PAHO will be holding a regional course on improving national quality control laboratories, together with USP (one of RPM Plus’ partners) in the fall. RPM Plus may build on this platform for working with the national quality control laboratory to improve management functions that relate to overall quality technical outputs.

A draft workplan is attached (Annex 2). In addition, a proposal for other activities that may be undertaken with additional support from USAID has been developed. These activities were also mentioned in the course of discussions with collaborators and partners. In general, they all contribute to the continuing implementation of the ministerial reorganization as well as support to the effort to improve access to quality pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical services in the community.

Collaborators and Partners

CPNM
Equipo de Reorganización del MINSA
HAI
PAHO

Next Steps

Immediate Follow-up Activities

- 1 Finalize and submit revision of workplan for remaining FY04 funds.
- 2 Develop and submit to USAID proposal for FY05 funds to support continuing and new activities.
- 3 Contact CPNM to continue planning for immediate activities.
- 4 Coordinate with HAI and PAHO for the planning of workshops on STG adaptation and rational drug use in the community.

Recommendations

The degree to which RPM Plus will be able to work with the Ventas Sociales de Medicamentos (VSM) in large part will depend on the passage of the special law that legalizes these shops. At the time of preparing this trip report, the expectation was that this law would be approved by the end of May, but some informants expressed reservations about this. Based on observations made during this visit, RPM Plus is concerned about the establishment of “similar” shops or would be illegal variations on the notion of a VSM. There are also many opportunities to learn about why some VSM are more successful than others, and to assist them to improve their performance.

RPM Plus will continue to support the efforts of the M&L program in Nicaragua, although activities will continue beyond the end of the M&L Project. Among the key activities to consider in this regard, RPM Plus recommends that before the end of the year, the information system of MINSA be addressed either directly by the follow-on project or through RPM Plus support. To date, the malfunctioning of SIMINSA, while widely recognized, has not been addressed due to competing priorities. RPM Plus can recommend a comprehensive inventory management system that can be made available through support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that has been implemented in several countries and will soon be available in Spanish.

Agreement or Understandings with Counterparts

1. As agreed with PAHO, CPNM and MINSA Reorganization Team, follow-up to program consultancies to support review and evaluation of procedures and development of corresponding norms for the supply system, most urgently for needs estimation and

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programming for procurements and for the establishment of a Drugs and Therapeutics Committee (Comité de Uso Racional de Medicamentos – CURIM).

2. Coordinate with HAI to program for workshops on Promoting Rational Drug Use in the Community (likely to occur in September) and for working on activities related to the VSM.

Annex 1.

AGENDA DE VISITA DRA. MARIA MIRALLES / VICE-DIRECTORA RPM PLUS

Lunes 25 de Abril

08:30am- 10:30am

Presentación del Plan de la CPNM
y progreso de actividades.

Local: Oficina MSH

02:00pm- 04:00am

Reunión con miembros de la CPNM

Local: Desp. Vice-Ministro de Salud

Objetivos

- Identificar áreas claves de trabajo
- Actividades específicas relacionadas
- Calendario

Martes 26 de Abril

07:00am-05:00pm

Visita a Hospital España en Chinandega, para conocer
Controles Internos de Insumos Médicos y problemática
para el acceso a los Anti-Retrovirales.

NOTA: Nos haremos acompañar
De Dra. María Elena Berríos de OPS

Miércoles 27 de Abril

08:00am-10:00am

Reunión con **Dra. Maritza Narváez**,
de la Comisión de Reorganización del MINSAs
y **Lic. Danilo Yescas**, Director del Sistema
de Abastecimiento

Local: Desp. Vice-Ministro de Salud

Objetivo: Darle a conocer los avances del proceso
de implementación de la Reorganización e integración del
Sistema de suministro

03:00pm-05:00pm

Reunión con la **Comisión de Medicamentos
Del Consejo Nacional de Salud**

Local: Auditorio OPS

Objetivo: Presentar el plan de trabajo a desarrollar 2005,
el identificar otras áreas de trabajo.

Jueves 28 de Abril

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07:00am-10:00am Visita a una Venta Social de Medicamento / Bo. de Managua
10:00am-04:00am Elaborar borrador de Plan de Trabajo
04:00pm Reunión con **Lic. Margarita Gurdían**, Ministra de Salud

Viernes 29 de Abril

09:00am-05:00pm Revisión del Plan de Trabajo con USAID-MSH
Local: USAID

Annex 2.

Propuesta de Asistencia Técnica y Financiera de RPM Plus 2005

| Productos | Resultados Intermedios | Hitos | Fecha | Contribución de RPM Plus (producto) |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Desarrolladas capacidades organizativas y de coordinación sectorial para la gerencia de insumos médicos a nivel nacional | La programación de compra de Insumos Médicos es coordinada por la DNIM: La DNIM cuenta con un manual de programación de Insumos Médicos | Elaborar propuesta armonizada de programación | 3 Jun | <i>En proceso.</i> Apoyar a la consultaría financiada por el OPS. En colaboración con la DNIM, revisar los procesos de programación y confirmar su contenido técnico (informe sobre la revisión) |
| | | Elaborar propuesta del manual de programación | 30 May | Elaborar el diseño del manual (diseño del manual) |
| | | Validar con al menos tres usuarios | 15 Jul | Seguir el ejercicio de validar los procesos (informe sobre la validación) |
| | | Presentar Manual de Programación * | 29 Sept | Producir Manual de Programación (x ejemplares producidos) |
| | | Usuarios capacitados en el uso del manual ** | 30 Nov | Organizar un taller para capacitar los usuarios |
| | Mejorado el uso y gestión de medicamentos y otros insumos médicos mediante el funcionamiento del CURIM: integrado y funcionando a nivel central el Comité de Uso Racional de Insumos Médicos. | Integrado a nivel central del MINSA el CURIM | 31 May | <i>En proceso</i> |
| | | Definir/afinar los TDRs de los participantes del CURIM y de las normas de actuación* | 29 Jul | En colaboración con la DNIM, facilitar un taller de dos o tres días para finalizar los TDR y afinar las normas de actuación (los TDR, normas, informe del taller) |
| | | Realizada la primera reunión oficial del CURIM central; desarrollo del plan operativo para el año.* | 15 Ago | Facilitar el desarrollo del plan operativo para el año (informe de la reunión, plan operativo) |
| | | | s/f | Proveer asistencia técnica específica según las necesidades identificadas (varias posibilidades) |
| | | Mejorar el use y gestión de | Desarrollo de planes operativos para | 15 Oct |

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| Productos | Resultados Intermedios | Hitos | Fecha | Contribución de RPM Plus (producto) |
|--|---|--|--------------|--|
| | medicamentos y otros insumos médicos mediante el funcionamiento de los CURIM locales* | mejorar los CURIM locales* | | facilitadores para mejorar el funcionamiento de los CURIM locales. |
| | Mejor uso y gestión de medicamentos en los hospitales** | Existencia de protocolos de atención médica estandarizadas para enfermedades infecto contaminantes claves (nivel hospitalario)** | 30 Oct | Facilitar la participación de participantes en el taller regional sobre como adaptar los protocolos de asistencia desarrollados por el OPS y como evaluar la implementación de ellos (taller financiado por RPM Plus con otro fuente de fondos) |
| | | Informe sobre desempeño del uso de los protocolos (informe de monitoreo)** | 28 Ene 06 | Facilitación de un taller para revisar los datos y evaluación del desempeño |
| | Mejor funcionamiento del laboratorio nacional** | Plan consensuado de los procedimientos a mejorar; definición de indicadores relevantes ** | 15 Dic | <i>(no se ha discutido con contrapartes). Para complementar un taller regional del OPS sobre como mejorar los laboratorios nacionales en Oct. Facilitar la aplicación del metodología MOST para mejorar el funcionamiento del laboratorio (plan de implementación)</i> |
| | | Monitoreo de indicadores claves según plan ** | 15 Jun 06 | <i>Seguimiento regular para revisar progreso a través de los informes mensuales</i> |
| Mejorado el acceso de la población a medicamentos esenciales de calidad y bajo costo | Mejorado los procesos de compras: estudiado y evaluado un ciclo de compra | Estudiados los actuales documentos de pliegos de bases y condiciones | 30 Jun | <i>¿? (no se ha discutido con Abastecimiento todavía)</i> |
| | | Evaluado un ciclo de compra de Insumos Médicos | 31 Ago | <i>Participar en la evaluación de la compra (informe con hallazgos, recomendaciones, etc.)</i> |
| | Mejorado el sistema de calidad de los medicamentos en las VSM** | Estudio de la situación actual de las VSM** | 30 Ago | En colaboración con COIME, etc., realizar un estudio de cómo funcionan los varios tipos de VSM, entender los factores que facilitan/impiden a un |

| Productos | Resultados Intermedios | Hitos | Fecha | Contribución de RPM Plus (producto) |
|------------------|---|---|--------------|--|
| | | | | buen desempeño (informe con hallazgos y recomendaciones) |
| | | Diseño de un sistema de control de calidad y un plan de implementación para las VSM** | 15 Oct | Diseño de un sistema de control de calidad y plan de implementación, identificación de fuentes de apoyo técnico y financiero |
| | Mejor uso de medicamentos en la comunidad** | Planes de acción de los participantes** | 30 Nov | Asistencia técnica y financiera (AIS) para realizar un taller sobre como promover el uso racional de medicamentos en la comunidad; facilitar la participación de representantes de Nicaragua |