

**RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON  
HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH 2004-2007**

*Programme memorandum*

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## 1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Health care is a hugely important service to all people in Finland, at least at some stage of their life. In order that the positive general trends in public health can be sustained, the health care system will need to make increasingly effective investments in the prevention of illnesses and the promotion of health. As the population continues to age, the need for many health and social care services is set to increase. There are a number of trends in public health that highlight the urgency of development efforts in the field of health services: examples include the recent growth of health inequalities between different population groups, the frequency of early retirement, the growth of substance abuse, and health problems among young people.

Access to effective health services is among the most basic social rights. Spending on health care in Finland today amounts to close on 7 per cent of GDP, and the figure is expected to rise. A substantial part of the country's workforce is employed in the health services sector. Health services are an integral and important part of the welfare state and the public sector and also a growing part of private business and the third sector. They rely on increasingly sophisticated technologies, apply the latest research and require of their staff an up-to-date training. At the same time, health services tie in very closely with ordinary citizens' everyday life and their everyday concerns.

International forces of change are having a major impact on the development of health services and the contents of health policy. This trend is set to gather further momentum. Key among these forces of change are the general economic development, the global pharmaceuticals industry as well as the free movement of labour, goods and services within the EU area and the enlargement of the European Union. Internationalisation presents both new opportunities and new threats, and research can significantly contribute to how these challenges are met.

With all the changes and challenges that now confront the health care sector – changes and challenges concerning the use and need for services, their provision, organisation, distribution, and funding – research on health services is assuming an increasingly prominent role. It has even been suggested that health services will run into a crisis unless solutions are found to the problems presented by the ageing of the population, the introduction of new technologies, staff overload and the production and funding of new services. The Finnish National Health Project

drew attention to significant development needs and outlined various plans that also present a challenge to research on health services.

Many disciplines concerned with the study of health, society and culture take an interest in health services. Health services research is often a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary exercise. It involves both empirical and applied research in which the aim is to help resolve the current and future problems of health care. The key position occupied by health services in modern society also underlines the importance of research that is geared to theoretical and methodological development.

Finnish health services research has been increasing over the past few decades, yet there still remain some obvious shortcomings in the development of the research system. Most of the work in this field is done by comparatively small research teams that are scattered between different university departments, or by individual researchers working in various health care organisations. It is difficult to organise and coordinate long-term, internationally competitive projects. There has not been enough work contributing to theoretical and methodological development, nor has there been enough multidisciplinary cooperation.

It was against this backdrop of a growing need for health services research and the development needs within the research system that the Academy of Finland and the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health Stakes decided in 2001 to host an exploratory workshop on the future of Finnish health services research. Organised on 20-22 August 2001 and attended by large numbers of Finnish researchers and end-users as well as by prominent foreign delegates, the workshop was unanimous on the need for a specific research programme on health services research. The Academy's Board took the decision at its meeting on 13 November 2002 to launch such a programme, earmarking 6 million euros for the purpose during the programme period 2003-2007.

A programme steering group consisting of representatives of the Academy of Finland as well as other parties involved in programme implementation was appointed to assume responsibility for finalising the preparations and for administering the programme.

Issues relevant to health services research have been touched upon in many other, earlier Academy research programmes. These include the Research Programme on Ageing (2000-2002), the programme on Health and Other Welfare Differences between Population Groups

(1999-2001) and the Health Promotion Research Programme (2001-2004). The current programme on Health Services Research can make good use of the results of these Academy programmes and other research that has addressed issues of health care in its own efforts to promote the development of key themes in health services research, its theoretical perspectives and methodological soundness.

## **2. AIMS AND THEMES OF THE PROGRAMME**

The aim of the research programme is to permanently strengthen the contribution of scientific research in the search for solutions to major development problems and challenges in the health care sector. At the same time, the programme wants to encourage closer collaboration between health services researchers and different actors within the health care system with a view to supporting more systematic use of research knowledge and to promoting research projects that address current challenges.

The programme offers three main avenues to improving the research system. First of all, it is committed to increasing cooperation among funders of health services research within the framework of a focused programme: this will help to promote cooperation later on as well. Secondly, the programme is geared to promoting national and international cooperation and networking among health services researchers as well as long-term, scientifically ambitious research organised on a sound multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary basis. A further concern is to increase the use and availability of broadly based research in political decision-making. Thirdly, working closely with existing graduate schools, university departments and scientific associations, the programme will be aiming to improve access to postgraduate training in health services research.

The research programme will be exploring the needs, methods, structures and decision-making related to health services from the points of view of ordinary citizens, professionals and decision-makers. The following lists some of the most important themes of the research programme:

- the value basis, justness and priorities of health care;
- decision-making concerning health care and its social, political and international connections;

- the challenges presented by the changing demographic structure and other changes in society to health care;
- innovations in and alternatives to the provision, organisation and funding of health services and other welfare services as seen from the vantage-point of the Finnish experience and international comparisons;
- the development of and prospects for private business in the health services sector, including industry and competition policy, the allocation of public funding and the impacts of the relationship between public and private health care services;
- ordinary citizens', patients' and their representative bodies' expectations and their chances of participating in and influencing health care services;
- working life, training and education, personnel development and management in health care;
- the development and internationalisation of the commodity, services, work and funding markets in health care and their impacts on the development of national and local health services; and
- the impacts and effectiveness of health care and its methods, models for the evaluation of those methods and the controlled utilisation of the new methods of health care and information and communications technologies.

### **3. APPROACHES TO HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH**

The problems and challenges presented to the development of health services can be approached from the theoretical and methodological perspectives of the various different disciplines active in the field of health services research. The research programme supports the involvement of a wide spectrum of disciplines in studying health services. At the same time it is aimed at promoting the development of multidisciplinary research projects as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research cooperation. The steering group does not want to circumscribe the disciplines it considers relevant to the programme. Some of the fields it would expect to see participating include epidemiology, administrative science, nursing science, public health science, medicine, psychology, the social sciences, social policy, economics, technical sciences, as well as historical, cultural and political research.

Mainstream health services research is characterised by a predominantly applied and empirical research approach. Projects taking part in the programme will be expected to show high scientific standards, to present viable and practicable research plans and to support the general objectives of the research programme. Multidisciplinary applications will be viewed favourably, as will those that involve relevant national and international research cooperation and collaboration with end-users of research results in the field of health care. The innovative use of existing materials is encouraged whenever possible; one example is provided by the extensive data registers compiled in Finland on the population's health. Theoretical and methodological work aimed at strengthening the scientific foundations of health services research will also be needed. The programme is committed to promoting the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME**

The Health Services Research Programme is scheduled to run for four years in 2004-2007. It is administered by a steering group chaired by Research Professor Elina Hemminki from the Academy of Finland, Research Council for Health. The group's vice chair is Professor Aila Lauha from the Research Council for Culture and Society of the Academy of Finland, and its other members are as follows:

- Docent Kaija Heikkinen, Research Council for Culture and Society, Academy of Finland;
- Timo Klaukka, Director of Health Research at the Social Insurance Institution;
- Olli-Pekka Lehtonen, Medical Director at the Kanta-Häme Hospital District;
- Professor Helena Leino-Kilpi, Research Council for Health, Academy of Finland;
- Ari Lindqvist, Chief Medical Officer at the Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District;
- Matti Liukko, Head of Unit at the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities;
- Professor Paavo Okko, Research Council for Culture and Society, Academy of Finland;
- Ilmo Parvinen, Chief of Department at the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development Sitra;
- Professor Hilka Soininen, Research Council for Health, Academy of Finland;
- Ilkka Tahvanainen, Research Ombudsman at the Finnish Work Environment Fund;
- Professor Timo Vesikari, Research Council for Health, Academy of Finland; and

- Kari Vinni, Director of Research and Development at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Two invited experts will contribute to the group's work: Docent Arja Aro from the National Public Health Institute and the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam; and Research Professor Marjukka Mäkelä from the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. Scientific Secretaries Tellervo Raijas and Jaana Salmensivu-Anttila from the Academy's Administrative Office will also be involved in the steering group.

Professor Juhani Lehto will be in charge of the programme in his capacity as Programme Director. Researcher Ulla Ashorn has been appointed to the position of Programme Coordinator. Both are from the School of Public Health at the University of Tampere.

Throughout the duration of the programme annual seminars will be arranged where the projects involved will be able to provide updates on the progress they have made and describe the results they have achieved as well as their needs and opportunities for cooperation. In addition, programme coordination will be working closely with interested universities, scientific associations and graduate schools to host thematic seminars and to organise researcher training. One of the main goals of programme coordination is to promote collaboration among research teams as well as their international contacts. Furthermore, the purpose is to support the scientific publication of work produced by the projects and to help publicise this work out in the field of health services. The projects involved in the programme will be informed about emerging new opportunities for international and national research and cooperation within the context of researcher training and about publishing channels available to the projects.

The researchers in charge of the projects will be expected to show a strong commitment to promoting cooperation within the research programme and to compile an assessment report upon completion of the programme.

Programme funding may be applied either by individual research teams or by consortia of several teams. The applications received will be processed in two phases. In the first phase applicants are invited to submit short plans of intent. Applications proper will then be invited from projects shortlisted on the basis of these plans. The process is described in closer detail under 4.1. and 4.2. below.

#### **4.1. Plan of intent**

Plans of intent shall be prepared in English and submitted either online or on Academy application form *SA 1.2003E*, with the programme acronym TERTTU indicated on the application. All applicants must indicate under item 38 of the application if they plan to apply for funding from other programme funders as well.

*Applications filed in electronic format* must be submitted via the Academy's website ([www.aka.fi/eng](http://www.aka.fi/eng) > Electronic services) no later than 15 May 2003. In addition, all applicants must sign and post one hard copy of the application.

*Applications filed in paper form* must be submitted in 26 copies (original and 25 copies) complete with appendices to the Academy of Finland Registrar's Office no later than 15 May 2003.

For first-round applications only the following appendices are required:

- a plan of intent no more than three pages in length;
- the CV of the researcher in charge of the project, no longer than two pages in length; and
- a list of no more than 20 scientific publications or other scientific output most directly relevant to the research project by the researcher in charge of the project or other senior researchers responsible for the project.

The plan of intent shall include a general description of the research and its objectives, explain how the research relates to the themes of the programme, describe its main methods, timetable, possible national and international cooperation, expected results and their applicability, its plans for researcher training and finally outline the budget of the project. Furthermore, all applicants must explain the reasons why they think the application belongs to this particular research programme.

If the application is filed in the name of a consortium, each project shall complete its own application form complete with appendices as explained above for individual project applications. In addition, the researcher in charge of the project must complete an application form on behalf of the whole consortium as well as a three-page plan of intent, which additionally describes the value added that will be achieved through the consortium effort.

The plans of intent will be reviewed by the programme steering group, which will then submit its proposal on shortlisted projects that will be invited to file second-phase research applications and research plans. The final decision rests with a programme section appointed by the Academy's Board and consisting of Research Council members. The persons in charge of the projects or consortia will be informed in writing about the section's decision. Applicants will be informed in the letter if they are advised to file their applications direct to other funding bodies and by what date they shall file those applications.

#### **4.2. Application proper**

The programme steering group may suggest that applicants going through to the second round join forces with other applicants, or that they realign the focus of their plans of intent if it is thought that this might contribute to a more coherent programme structure. The applications shall be prepared in the English language.

##### ***Individual application***

Applicants going through to the second round and requested to submit an application proper, shall file their application with the Academy of Finland no later than 15 September 2003. The applications shall be submitted either in electronic format or on Academy application form SA 1.2003E, with the programme acronym TERTTU indicated on the application (see above). The research plan shall be no longer than 10 pages in length and include a summary no more than one page in length. Applications in paper form shall be submitted complete with appendices in 26 copies (original and 25 copies) and, bound into identical parcels, sent to the Academy of Finland Registrar's Office. Applicants are expected to follow the instructions set out in the Academy's Guide for Applicants.

##### ***Consortium application***

If the application is filed in the name of a consortium, each partner shall fill in its own application form complete with the relevant appendices (see Guide for Applicants). However the application shall be followed by one research plan only. This should detail the joint research plan for the whole consortium, specifying for each consortium partner their specific role and contribution within the broader context of the consortium. A consortium application must be followed by a one-page diagram illustrating the division of labour within the consortium and a description of the valued added that this cooperation is expected to generate.

The research plan should be no longer than 15 pages and must include a summary no more than one page in length. The researcher heading the consortium and the researchers in charge of the individual research teams must sign the joint research plan that applies to all partners.

The complete consortium application with application forms (the joint consortium application and the applications for each individual project) and all appendices (including the joint research plan) shall be sent to the Academy of Finland Registrar's Office in one original and 25 copies, bound into identical parcels.

An international panel of experts will be appointed to evaluate the scientific merits of the shortlisted applications. Following this evaluation and on the recommendations of the programme steering group, a section appointed by the Board of the Academy will make the final decision on the allocations to be awarded to the research programme. The other bodies involved in funding the programme have their own procedures and timetables for decision-making.

#### **4.3. Evaluation of the programme**

The research programme shall be evaluated in 2008 in accordance with the guidelines of the Academy of Finland and the programme steering group. The researchers in charge of the projects shall provide to the programme coordinator all the documentation necessary for the purposes of this evaluation as well as the results of the project self-assessments. The self-assessment of programme coordination will be carried out by the coordinator. The external evaluation will then be conducted on the basis of these documents. In addition, a separate assessment will be conducted to determine the social relevance of the programme.

#### **4.4. Timetable of the programme**

- Deadline for plans of intent: 4.15 p.m. on 15 May 2003 to the Academy of Finland
- Projects going through to the second round shall be informed of the Academy's decision and listed on the Academy's website on 20 June 2003
- Deadline for applications proper: 4.15 p.m. on 15 September 2003 to the Academy of Finland
- Decisions on projects to be funded from Academy sources shall be made on 20 November 2003. The decisions of the other funding bodies will be known by 30 Jan 2004.

- An opening seminar will be arranged in February 2004
- Funding for the projects shall be made available no sooner than 1 January 2004 and shall end no later than 31 December 2007
- The research programme will be evaluated in 2008.

## **5. Funding and cooperation**

The research programme is coordinated by the Academy of Finland. Working closely with the Academy in programme implementation and funding are the following bodies: the Social Insurance Institution, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, hospital districts, the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development Sitra and the Finnish Work Environment Fund. A single research project may be funded by one or more funding bodies: for example, most of the project funds may be provided by the Academy of Finland, with additional funding coming from some other body. Funds obtained from other funding bodies (including additional funding) may be for periods other than the programme term from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2007.

The Board of the Academy of Finland has earmarked 6 million euros for the programme. Other funding bodies will be making their funding decisions by the end of January 2004. For this reason projects will be notified of the funds granted in two stages: projects receiving Academy funding will be informed on 20 November 2003, those receiving funds from other sources will be informed by 30 January 2004 latest.

The following briefly describes what kind of factors and perspectives the different funding bodies will be looking for in reviewing funding applications.

### **5.1. Funding bodies with application processes administered by the Academy of Finland**

#### **5.1.1. Academy of Finland**

The research programme is coordinated by the Academy of Finland. Two of the Academy's research councils are involved in administering the programme, viz. the Research Council for Health and the Research Council for Culture and Society. All Academy research programmes share the same goals, i.e. to develop research environments; to bring together scattered research capacities; to promote multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and where possible

transdisciplinarity; to develop national and international cooperation between researchers, funding bodies and end-users of research results; to increase the international visibility of Finnish research through the joint effort of researchers, research organisations and funding bodies; and to promote researcher training and professional careers in research. Research programmes are expected to produce value added compared to individual research projects.

In reviewing the applications it receives, the Academy will consider the following criteria:

- does the project support the objectives of the research programme;
- is the scientific content of the proposed project of a sufficiently high standard;
- is the proposed research innovative and multidisciplinary;
- is the applicant/research group competent enough to reach the objectives set out;
- is the proposed research plan feasible;
- does the proposed project support and promote national and international research, what kind of value added will it generate for the research;
- what significance does the research project have for postgraduate training and for the qualitative development of research environments;
- what kind of practical applicability will the research results have; and
- what are the prospects for creating new research contacts and networks.

The Academy of Finland's Guide for Applicants 2003 (1 March 2003 – 28 Feb 2004), the May 2003 call for proposals, this programme memorandum and application forms can be obtained from the Academy's website at [www.aka.fi/eng](http://www.aka.fi/eng) and the Registrar's Office. Applications shall be sent to the Registrar's Office, address POB 99, FIN-00501 HELSINKI (street address Vilhonvuorenkatu 6), e-mail [keskus@aka.fi](mailto:keskus@aka.fi).

For further details, visit [www.aka.fi](http://www.aka.fi) and [www.aka.fi/eng](http://www.aka.fi/eng) > Research programmes > Research programmes open for application in 2003. For any enquires, please contact

Scientific Secretary Tellervo Raijas, Academy of Finland

tel. +358 9 7748 8245

e-mail: [tellervo.raijas@aka.fi](mailto:tellervo.raijas@aka.fi)

Scientific Secretary Jaana Salmensivu-Anttila, Academy of Finland

tel. +358 9 7748 8348

e-mail: [jaana.salmensivu@aka.fi](mailto:jaana.salmensivu@aka.fi).

### **5.1.2. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health**

Projects funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health are expected to support the objectives of the National Health Project as well as those recorded in the Ministry's Social and Health Policy Strategies 2010 report. For further details on the National Health Project and social and health policy strategies, visit the Ministry's website at [www.stm.fi](http://www.stm.fi).

### **5.1.3. Social Insurance Institution**

The Social Insurance Institution (SII) is particularly interested in research projects that can be expected to produce information relevant for the development of the sickness insurance system, for instance. Other subject areas that are of interest to the SII include the effectiveness of the rehabilitation system, the promotion of sensible drug use, the role of private research and nursing services in the health care system, the role of SII awarded sickness benefits to the operation of the health care system and the effectiveness of the occupational health service.

The SII has no fixed budget for supporting health services research, but funding decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the quality and quantity of projects proposed to the institution. In 2003, applications filed with the Academy will undergo the same review process as other projects related to the programme .

For further details on research at the SII, go to [www.kela.fi/research](http://www.kela.fi/research). For any enquiries concerning research funding by the institution, please contact Timo Klaukka, Chief of Health Research, on tel. +358 20 4341969, +358 40 7574937, or e-mail [timo.klaukka@kela.fi](mailto:timo.klaukka@kela.fi).

### **5.1.4. Finnish National Fund for Research and Development Sitra**

Sitra's operation is geared to creating a better future for ordinary citizens in Finland: this it hopes to achieve by supporting projects that can contribute to a more effective utilisation of the resources of the national economy or that can clarify the options that are open for future development. Sitra is most particularly interested in uncovering new solutions that as well as having beneficial health effects will strengthen the quantitative and qualitative growth of the

national economy and that will improve the country's international competitiveness and cooperation.

More specifically, this means that Sitra is interested to support projects that are concerned with the empowerment of individual citizens; the development of more flexible service systems for end-users; and the development of more efficient as well as cost-effective service systems. Examples of current research interests include the study of private business ventures in the health care sector and related export opportunities; the relationship between the health care system and industry policy; and health care prioritisation and relationship between public and private health services.

For further information on Sitra, go to [www.sitra.fi](http://www.sitra.fi)

Enquiries:

Ilmo Parvinen, Chief of Department

tel. +358 9 6189 9428

e-mail: [ilmo.parvinen@sitra.fi](mailto:ilmo.parvinen@sitra.fi) and

Mirja Gröhn, Development Manager

tel. +358 9 6189 9247

e-mail: [mirja.grohn@sitra.fi](mailto:mirja.grohn@sitra.fi).

#### **5.1.5. The Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities**

Research and development projects supported by the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities are focused upon the municipal sector and aimed at promoting the operation of municipal organisations. They produce predictive and analytical information, useful comparative data on municipal operations and help to create sound new procedures. The projects support the Federation's strategic objectives, which are based upon an analysis of the changing environment in which local councils today are operating as well as on the results of the Federation's customer survey. Partners in Federation research projects include local municipalities and municipal federations, universities and research institutes.

In Finland, the keys to promoting the welfare and health of the population are largely held by local municipalities. The health of the population depends not so much upon health services as upon various other factors. Most interventions that have an impact on people's welfare and

health concern the whole community and should therefore be designed and discussed in the context of community strategies. However, this is not always what happens at the municipal level. Individual citizens also have a responsibility to look after their own as well as their family's welfare. Local municipalities can for their part prevent the emergence of new problems by making sure that people have access to a healthy living environment that is free from unnecessary obstacles.

Social and health care services in Finland are funded by local government; central government currently accounts for no more than just over one-fifth of the total social and health care budget. Although the financial situation of local as well as central government has improved in recent years with the strong economy, the amount of money allocated to social welfare and health care services has still fallen short of expectations. Migration within the country has meant that in some municipalities the need for services is decreasing, in others increasing too rapidly.

Services are for local residents, the people living in the municipality. As the population continues to age and the range of treatment options available continues to expand, the scarcity of resources will make it increasingly difficult for the local authorities to meet the expectations of local residents. With the increasing awareness that people are now showing of the various new opportunities available and with their growing quality consciousness, local municipalities will have to look into new ways of service provision. At the same time the shortage of skilled labour will make it more and more difficult for local councils to recruit the experts they need. These and other similar challenges mean that local municipalities are going to have to rethink the way they organise their services.

For further information, visit [www.kuntaliitto.fi](http://www.kuntaliitto.fi) or contact Matti Liukko, Head of Social Welfare and Health Unit:

e-mail [matti.liukko@kuntaliitto.fi](mailto:matti.liukko@kuntaliitto.fi)

tel. +358 9 7712611

## **5.2. Funding bodies with their own application processes**

### **5.2.1. Finnish Work Environment Fund**

The Finnish Work Environment Fund supports research and development efforts aimed at improving working conditions and at promoting the health, safety and productivity of workplaces. Research projects concerned with related issues are invited to file applications under the Research Programme on Health Services Research. One of the areas that the Fund considers to warrant special attention is represented by systems governing the operation of health service providers. The contribution of research consortia and multidisciplinary research teams is highlighted by the importance of the various questions related to innovation, development and relations of trust in the workplace. For further information, visit [www.tsr.fi](http://www.tsr.fi)

Researchers or research teams preparing plans of intent or applications proper are encouraged to contact the Work Environment Fund directly. Applicants will be required to complete the Academy of Finland application form complete with appendices, indicating in the form that they are also applying for funding from the Work Environment Fund. In the second round when applications proper are filed, applicants will also be required to complete the Work Environment Fund's funding application complete with additional information. All applications filed with the Work Environment Fund will be processed in the Academy's review process. The Fund will only support such projects that have been accepted in that process. The Board of the Work Environment Fund will conduct a separate review of such applications as have been submitted to the Fund and approved by the Academy, and on the basis of these deliberations make its own funding decisions.

Enquiries:

Peter Rehnström, Managing Director, tel. +358 9 6803 3310

Ilkka Tahvanainen, Research Ombudsman, tel. +358 9 6803 3313

### **5.2.2. Hospital districts**

Hospital districts are charged with the responsibility of producing specialised medical and dental services related to the prevention, examination and treatment of illnesses, to medical rescue services and to medical rehabilitation. University teaching and research is organised within these districts by special areas of responsibility. Hospital districts are entitled to receive special state subsidies to cover the costs incurred from university-level health-related research. Part of these subsidies are used to support research concerned with the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of research, treatment and rehabilitation methods and with the operation of the

health services system (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health decree 8 January 2003, 9§). There are very few hospital districts with substantial expertise in this line of research. The challenge of developing specialised health care will require major joint (regional/national) projects that cannot be carried out within one single organisation. Ideally, multidisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary partnerships will be created with networks of researchers from various different centres joining forces around a major research project.

Research projects are encouraged to apply that have the potential to resolve the problems now facing the health care system and that have immediate applicability in attempts to improve and develop the service system. As far as hospital districts are concerned, key considerations include:

- increasing the skills and competencies of staff members by means of knowledge and expertise transfer;
- measuring the need for health services;
- immediate improvements particularly in the allocative efficiency of health services (the best solutions in the choice of methods and approaches);
- studying decision-making on health services, particularly from the point of view of service effectiveness and equality; and
- additional effects of the specialised health care system upon others actors in the social and health care field.

All applications received for participation in the Health Services Research Programme shall be processed confidentially by the respective hospital district in independent scientific processes. Each hospital district allocating funds to the programme will decide upon its participation independently: applications must be reviewed within and by the districts themselves before any final funding decisions are made. Financial monitoring and reporting requirements mean that where special state subsidies are concerned, a researcher in charge must be appointed within each organisation. Hospital districts will give preference to projects that are carried out jointly with local researchers: this will help to strengthen the hospital districts' own expertise and knowhow in the field of health research and to secure their access to special state grants in the future.

For contact information of different hospital districts, go to [www.kuntaliitto.fi/soster/erikois/shpos.html](http://www.kuntaliitto.fi/soster/erikois/shpos.html).

## 6. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the Research Programme on Health Services Research, contact

Ulla Ashorn, Programme Coordinator

Tampere School of Public Health, 33014 University of Tampere

tel. +358 3 215 8480  
gsm +358 40 7080 354  
e-mail [ulla.ashorn@uta.fi](mailto:ulla.ashorn@uta.fi)

Professor Juhani Lehto, Programme Director

Tampere School of Public Health, 33014 University of Tampere

tel. +358 3 215 6804  
gsm +358 50 372 1942  
e-mail [juhani.lehto@uta.fi](mailto:juhani.lehto@uta.fi)