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Those planning, managing and working in health systems worldwide routinely need to make decisions regarding strategies to improve health care and promote equity. Systematic reviews of different kinds can be of great help to these decision-makers, providing actionable evidence at every step in the decision-making process. Although there is growing recognition of the importance of systematic reviews to inform both policy decisions and produce guidance for health systems, a number of important methodological and evidence uptake challenges remain and better coordination of existing initiatives is needed. The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, housed within the World Health Organization, convened an Advisory Group on Health Systems Research (HSR) Synthesis to bring together different stakeholders interested in HSR synthesis and its use in decision-making processes. We describe the rationale of the Advisory Group and the six areas of its work and reflects on its role in advancing the field of HSR synthesis. We argue in favour of greater cross-institutional collaborations, as well as capacity strengthening in low- and middle-income countries, to advance the science and practice of health systems research synthesis. We advocate for the integration of quasi-experimental study designs in reviews of effectiveness of health systems intervention and reforms. The Advisory Group also recommends adopting priority-setting approaches for HSR synthesis and increasing the use of findings from systematic reviews in health policy and decision-making

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