

## Annual Report of the AFSM Communications Committee

**Coordinator and Editor-in-Chief:** Marilyn Rice

**Members:** Antonio Hernandez, Carol Collado Enrique Fefer, Gloria Coe, Gloria Morales, Germán Perdomo, Hernan Rosenberg, Hortensia R. Saginor, Johanna Ganon, Jorge Luis Prospero Ramírez, Juan Manuel Sotelo, Martha Pelaez, Patricia Ilijic, Rolando Chacon, Rossana Allende, Stanislaw Orzeszyna, Sumedha Mona Khanna, Violeta Mata Garcia

Purposes:

1. Provide a means for regular communication on important and relevant issues to and among former PAHO staff members, their significant others, and our extended network
2. Ensure clear and good quality messages are transmitted on behalf of AFSM in at least English and Spanish
3. Maximize the use of the five AFSM means of communication (Facebook, Website, Newsletter, Zoom, emails) to engage with and inform AFSM members
4. Keep members informed of developments at PAHO and of news regarding former staff living in both the US and other countries
5. Offer a way for members to contact AFSM (afsmpho@gmail.com) to share information or concerns and to request assistance with personal issues

Responsibilities or Areas of Action

1. Produce a newsletter, in English and Spanish, 3-4 times a year, that highlights important information for and about members, including member contributions
2. Review, edit, translate, and revise AFSM documents and key messages before they are published or sent to members and the general public
3. Manage, update, and improve the content and format of the AFSM Website
4. Oversee postings on the Facebook Page
5. Publish results and observations related to surveys conducted with members

6. Support virtual connections with PAHO in HQ (Chief of Cabinet, HR, HIS, and others as needed) to help solve problems and communicate with retirees
7. Offer an additional virtual link with PAHO offices in countries/PWRs (PWR, HR) to help solve problems and communicate with retirees
8. Establish and share guidance about what should be posted or sent to the members and via what communication channel

Midway through 2022, the Publications and the Communications Committees were combined into one Communications Committee, putting under one umbrella all activities related to communications with our members, including blast messages, emails, Facebook, the newsletter, and the website. This has included the editing in English and Spanish of any official communication sent out on behalf of our AFSM. The members of the new committee requested that Marilyn Rice become the chair of the new committee.

A small working group was formed (Gloria Coe, Marilyn Rice, Rossana Allende, and Violeta Mata Garcia) to finalize the brochure describing AFSM for use to promote membership and to inform PWRs and others about us. It is now available on the website in English and Spanish. [https://www.afsmpaho.com/files/ugd/6814f4\\_6a73d8e1938d44958887dc40be041541.pdf](https://www.afsmpaho.com/files/ugd/6814f4_6a73d8e1938d44958887dc40be041541.pdf)

Additionally, a document was developed to guide former staff or their designated Representative in what to be done in case of death of a former staff member or spouse. It is also posted on the website in English and Spanish.

### **Blast Messages** (Antonio Hernandez)

The statistics of the "Blast Message (BM) system" reveal:

AFSM Members: 684

AFSM members subscribed in the BM 580 (members with registered email)

AFSM members ACTIVE in the BM 562 (members opening and clicking onto the messages)

Average BM sent per year - 60

Average rate of messages OPENED - 58.8% (peers average 49.5%)

Average rate of messages CLICKED - 8% (peers average 6.3%). (Clicking in a link when included in the message)

80% of messages opened were from people residing in the USA.

**Future directions:**

For the time being we are well synchronized (based on the statistics). One concern is to increase the number of members that have access to electronic email (increasing the ones that currently do not have one or obtaining information from the ones that changed their addresses and did not inform us). Work needs to be done to identify how to reach those who do not have this access, as well as to update our database with information about contact information for spouses/significant others of former staff, family members registered to read messages, and members who are 85-90 and 90+.

**Facebook** (Violeta Mata Garcia)

The AFSM Facebook Site was created in July 2011, with 117 active members today. AFSM Members use it as a social media networking site to connect with other former PAHO staff members as well as to share pictures, videos, articles, etc. They also use this platform to post topics or issues related to Health Insurance and Pension, among others. Once concerns are posted, they are routed to the appropriate AFSM Executive Board Committee for guidance or solutions.

Since AFSM PAHO/WHO began disseminating information to foster Healthy Ageing, the number of community exchanges on Facebook have increased by almost 50%, with increasing interest in participating in conferences, surveys, and

other related activities that are also shared among family members, relatives, and friends. This has helped to foster healthy ageing among our members as well as with their ageing relatives.

### **Future directions:**

Most former staff may find electronic technology challenging enough to make it more difficult to become “netizens” than other generations. But nowadays we live in a digital era, so we must take advantage of all the apps, electronic devices, digital platforms, among others, that help us increase support for everyday routines. This is an area where AFSM needs to find a way to reach out and support its members. Also, there will soon be an AFSM Instagram Account; this should support our AFSM community in becoming more aware and proficient in the new technical, social, and other interesting and cutting-edge topics.

### **Newsletter** (Marti Rice editor, German Perdomo co-editor)

Four newsletters were produced in 2022 (March, July, September, and December), with increasing contributions from our members with each issue. The newsletter is distributed via an email message to all our members in good standing and it is sent via email to key contacts in PAHO HQ as well as to the Presidents of the Geneva and Regional AFSMs. We continue to receive very positive feedback via email and Facebook, some of which is published in the “Letters to the Editor” section of the subsequent issue.

<https://www.afsmpaho.com/copy-of-newsletters>

### **Future directions:**

The newsletter is considered to be one of the key mechanisms we have to maintain communication with our members, as well as an important incentive for people to become members. For this reason, the Board decided that interested parties could receive the newsletter on a trial basis but that to continue to have access to it they should become members. At the moment, the newsletter is available to anyone via our website but it is expected that when the website is

updated to allow access to certain sections only via password that access to the newsletter will be restricted to our members.

**Website** (Stan Orzeszyna 2022, Jorje Luis Prosperi Ramirez 2023)

This will be my last annual report prepared by Stan Orzeszyna as a Webmaster of our AFSM Website. As you will see in the report, he has done an amazing job in revamping the site in response to multiple requests from members. From 1 January 2023, he will be replaced by Jorge Prosperi, who kindly agreed to become the Webmaster.

The usual activities on the Website were continued throughout 2022, including ongoing updating and improving of the Website's content and format. These tasks were accomplished with guidance, advice, and requests of the AFSM Board. Significant improvements were achieved through suggestions received by professional website consultants. In general, the resulting website design became attractive to look at, easy to search and find what was desired, and responsive to the needs of the membership.

The principal implemented changes were as follows: The menu system was improved, which proved to be a difficult task due to a relatively inflexible operating software used for the site. A straightforward site search system was installed, so that with one click one can now find a particular term from anywhere in the site. The site became user-friendly for all devices, particularly tablets and smartphones.

**Future directions:**

However, there are still inconsistencies across pages, particularly between the English and Spanish versions. This, along with the issues of password protection of some pages and reinstalling the member's directory, will be a significant task and challenge to the new Webmaster.