



NEWSLETTER

THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PAHO/WHO STAFF MEMBERS

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International Reunion, 18 – 20 October

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President's Message



Dear colleagues, friends and members of the Association,

I hope that this message finds you well, healthy and happy.

We had some very pleasant days in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, sharing fun moments, remembering common experiences, and getting to know each other in a more personal way. We also had the opportunity to talk about topics that concern us all, such as access to information, health insurance, pension and the future of our Association. In this issue of the Newsletter we are including a brief review of this beautiful encounter, as well as some photos as an unforgettable testimony. The detailed report of this meeting, prepared by our friend and associate, Juan Manuel Sotelo, appears separately in this Newsletter and will enable you to enjoy the details he recorded with great precision and grace.

You will notice changes in the content of the Newsletter, the most remarkable one being the variety of articles that are included. The Board has agreed to accommodate more articles prepared by members of the Association, with all possible literary styles, so we invite all members to send us your writings, prose, poems, stories, reviews and reflections, so that the Newsletter will be enriched by these contributions.

Also, to the extent that you favorably respond to this call for contributions, we will produce more newsletter more often.

Let me say clearly once again that we are all the Association, and its future depends on all of us.

My best wishes to you all,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Juan', written on a light yellow rectangular background.

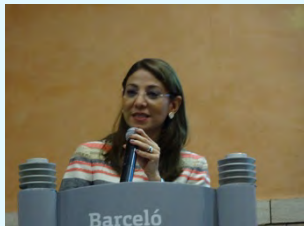
Seventh International Reunion

By Juan Manuel Sotelo



The Seventh International Meeting of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members (AFSM) was held between October 18 and 20, 2016, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. This meeting had the enthusiastic participation of 49 people, including 32 associates and 17 guests, family and friends, from 10 countries.

The opening session began with a welcome from Germán Perdomo, President of AFSM who reported that the international meetings of the Association are biennial and have been taking place, uninterrupted every two years. He emphasized the eminently social nature of the meeting, requesting that information be shared and a festive atmosphere be adopted as much as possible. Likewise, Germán expressed his sincere thanks for the support provided by colleagues on various issues, contributing to the success of the meeting, and he thanked the guests for attending.

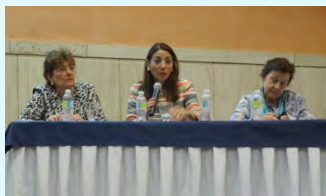


Dr. Alma Fabiola Morales, PAHO/WHO Representative in the Dominican Republic (PWR-DOR), offered her greetings and acknowledged the role of former staff in PAHO's evolution and history. Dr. Morales stressed the value of reconnecting among colleagues who worked in the Organization over the years. She also reported on some measures her office is taking to create an agreement with health providers that should benefit former staff who reside in the country.

Dr. Carissa Etienne, PAHO Director, greeted participants at the meeting through a video. She expressed her appreciation for the dedicated work of former PAHO staff, including the example that should be replicated by others due to their commitment, values and practices. In her speech, the Director referred to the last meeting of the Organization's Directing Council (DC), highlighting "good news" such as the eradication of measles, the 40th Anniversary of the Emergency Program, the 50th Anniversary of the PALTEX Program and recognition of Uruguay for its fight against the tobacco industry. Finally, Dr. Etienne mentioned some of the resolutions adopted by the DC on issues such as neglected diseases, control of arbovirus diseases and improvements in access to high-cost drugs.

The participants were then invited to introduce themselves, which was done in a warm, relaxed and spontaneous atmosphere.

Subsequently, in response to the proposal put forward by Germán Perdomo, Helena Restrepo was elected as Chair of the meeting and Juan Manuel Sotelo as Secretary.



The first working day of the Seventh International Meeting included a session on developments in PAHO and the Directing Council, taking advantage of the fact that Dr. Alma Fabiola Morales, PWR-DOR and Mirta Roses, PAHO Director Emeritus were present. They highlighted the advances in automation of several managerial and administrative processes in PAHO, within the framework of the Program Management Information System (PMIS). This technological change initially meant delays and had an impact on all transactions, including the settlement of health insurance claims and the granting of pensions to new beneficiaries. With great enthusiasm, the DC passed the decision to advance a peace process in Colombia. Reference was made to the anti-vaccine movement, a topic in which AFSM and its members could intervene to counteract it. It was highlighted that next year will be the celebration for 40 years of the Expanded Program of Immunizations and 40 years of the International Meeting on Primary Health Care, held in Alma Ata. Reference was made to the aging of the population and the slowness with which health systems are trying to respond to this issue. It was recognized that Guatemala was certified as free from Onchocerciasis. It was also reported that there were private presentations by three of the six candidates for the position of WHO Directorate-General.

The agenda of the meeting included information on the history of the Dominican Republic and the health status in the country; progress and developments in PAHO; new services and issues of interest from the PAHO/WHO Credit Union; and information of interest on health insurance and pension.

The agenda of the meeting included two presentations on the Dominican Republic, the first on aspects of the country's history, culture and development, by Dr. Inmaculada Madera, and the second on the country's health situation, by Pedro Luis Castellanos. It is very interesting to note how Dr. Madera skillfully approached the history of the Dominican Republic and its relationship with Haiti and with two European powers - Spain and France. This relationship, along with the presence of African slavery, had a racial, cultural and idiosyncratic impact on Dominicans. He also reported on aspects of the evolution of the country's economic base, from a sugar-based economy, to the current significant tourism sector. Politics were extensively important and he gave a review of the diverse leaders and authoritarian and dictatorial situations as well as the invasion of the country, on two occasions, by the United States.



Pedro Luis framed the situation of the country in an international context, and referred to macroeconomic aspects noting that, despite the good GDP growth of 7% (with US\$6,000 per capita nowadays) and the reduction of poverty, there is still a significant situation of inequality. The problems of security, housing, corruption, violence and unemployment are remarkable. He reviewed data from the study of

disease burden, noting that maternal mortality remains relatively high and a significant burden of accidents falls on the young population. He stressed that a good culture of eating and physical activity has not been generated, which is demonstrated by a high incidence of obesity and overweight. He reported that the population smokes little but consumes plenty of alcohol. The health system has not been changed to keep up with the challenges that it has to face. The issue of quality of care seems to be significant. Currently 70% of the population is covered by Social Security.

A lively discussion followed both presentations.

The PAHO/WHO Credit Union was represented by Mr. Miguel Boluda, CEO and Mrs. Patricia Ilijic, Executive Vice President. Both reported on the Credit Union's current situation, including its resources, infrastructure, loans and services. In their presentation they referred to loans they provided to newly retired people who were waiting for their pension to be paid. They requested that people keep their Credit Union accounts active and they announced that a credit card with rewards is already available to the members. It was mentioned that as of November 15, one must register "online" on the website with a username with six or more characters and a password of 10 characters. Christmas loans this year will be up to \$ 15,000 and can be paid off over 1 to 8 years.



In the evening, a very lively and cheerful welcome reception was provided by the Credit Union. It was a moment of relaxation, dancing, conversation and friendship.



The second day of the Meeting began with a discussion on health insurance and participants were invited to present their experiences. Carol Collado reported that PAHO/WHO retirees' health insurance is self-financed with a self-insured fund and she affirmed that it is "the best insurance in the world". WHO's governance includes two global committees, one that defines policies and another that monitors their performance. Additionally, there is a Regional Subcommittee for the Americas. The focal point for this issue at the PAHO office in Washington, DC is Omaris Nieves (nieveso@paho.org). Carol commented on the blue card sent by WHO to participants in the insurance program and it was suggested that it be used regularly in the countries, and for those residing in the United States it should be taken with them when they travel abroad.



Germán Perdomo said that the best measure for health is prevention and promotion, leading a healthier lifestyle. It is also the best way to take care of our health insurance. One way to avoid problems with health insurance claims is to know well what insurance covers, to have prior approval for some procedures, to send all supporting documentation of expenses when making the claim and also to keep a photocopy of what is sent. The general discussion covered topics such as whether to use original or electronic

prescriptions for drugs, as well as the use of national insurance in a complementary way. Many of these issues are subject to the practices and regulations in each country and participating in national insurance is still being studied by the Organization.

It was explained that pensions received by former staff are comprised of a proportion that was paid for by the individual and another paid for by the Organization. It is important to know this information for tax payment purposes. Participants were requested to read the rules of the Pension Fund, to know how to contact it and how to access the corresponding website. It was pointed out that the new page for the beneficiaries allows one to know a lot of personal and updated information about the pensioner, his/her statement of accounts and the receipt of the Certificate of Rights. On this website one can get copies of the forms that should be used in case of change of address or change of bank account. The Certificate of Rights, or Survival, is sent in the month of May and then resubmitted in August. The importance of signing it and sending it back as soon as it is received was stressed. In the case of the death of a former PAHO/WHO staff member, the Pension Fund and the Credit Union should be informed. It was requested that a relative or person close to the former staff member be familiar with this procedure. For this and other important information one should go to the AFSM website (www.afsmpaho.com).

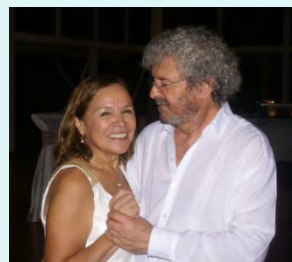
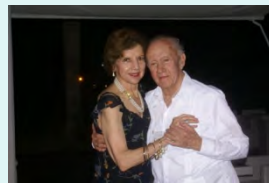


Rep Reports on activities of two AFSM chapters were given: Bolivia and Colombia. Carmen Rosa Serrano reported on the Chapter in Bolivia and Helena Restrepo and Gustavo Mora on the Chapter in Colombia.

In his report on the future of AFSM, Germán Perdomo commented on membership, chapters, communications and decision-making. Currently, only a third of retired staff are members, leaving about 1,010 people who have not yet joined. AFSM is considering stimulating the formation of a chapter for the Caribbean and another for Central America. Communications are increasingly electronic, via Facebook, the website, electronic mail (afsmpaho@gmail.com) and the Newsletter. Another issue mentioned was the financial situation, which is having some difficulties due to the suspension of PAHO's AFSM annual subsidy. Discussions are ongoing with the PAHO Directorate. Participants decided to make a voluntary contribution during this Seventh Meeting and raised more than US\$1,000. It was a very generous gesture from the participants.

Two proposals were received on venues for the eighth international meeting: Florida, in the United States, and Costa Rica. However, no decision was made pending detailed information about costs and facilities.

During the closing ceremony, the Chair of the meeting thanked attendees for their active participation, their cordial tone and the good ideas expressed. She expressed her appreciation to the former staff residents in the Dominican Republic and congratulated the organizers of the event. **N**



ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

What: 27th General Meeting

When: 9:30 AM, 8 December 2016

Where: PAHO HQ

- Greet old friends and colleagues over a cup of coffee
- Hear updates on your health insurance and pension plans
- Get information about AFSM activities, including the recent International Reunion in Dominican Republic
- Listen to Credit Union announcements and participate in the raffle
- Take advantage of this as your opportunity to let us know how to better serve our members
- Enjoy a leisurely luncheon and wine

INFORM HORTENSIA R. SAGINOR if you are coming and if you are having lunch: isaginor@aol.com o hortensiasagi@gmail.com

COME AND PARTICIPATE!

Staff Health Insurance and Pension

Happy Holidays!

By Carol Collado



Staff Health Insurance

As the year winds down, it seems appropriate to remember some of the important things about our Staff Health Insurance (SHI) so that we can continue to enjoy its generous benefits. Although some of this may be repetitive to you, it is always good to review and know where we stand.

We are a self-insured venture. This means that we must always be looking to balance our benefits with costs. Because WHO has adopted the *International Public Sector Accounting Standards* (IPSAS), the Organization is required have funds in reserve roughly equivalent to 30 years of expected expenses. WHO, following the auditors' advice, decided to plan for the long term of the SHI fund in 2011. After 15 years in which no increases were charged to participants, a one-time 10% increase was applied in 2011, accompanied by a 4% annual increase since 2012. The situation is closely monitored to assure that our SHI continues to provide excellent coverage while being sustainable.

Reminder: Since retirees are charged for SHI in the month preceding activity, your December pension deposit will be somewhat less because the 4% increase has been applied to what is deducted for SHI coverage.

In the beginning of 2016, a new version of the staff health rules was distributed with a benefits table that makes it much easier to find exactly what benefits we have and what the requirements are for claiming them. Please, take a few minutes and review this document so that you are conscious of what services you have a right to receive. Many of the difficulties that we see in the surveillance and appeals processes are because the rights and/or procedures were not understood. Remember, some benefits require previous authorization and there are also time limits for submitting claims. (Should you not be able to put your fingers on your document; you can find it on the AFSM website: <http://www.afsmpaho.com>). You will be receiving an informational letter from SHI Headquarters towards the end of the year. We are not expecting major changes for 2017, but be sure to check after the first of the year when the results from the General Oversight Committee's recommendations to the Director General will be published. Of course, AFSM will keep you posted if we have your email address.

Also during 2016, WHO contracted a service which responds to emergencies 24 hours a day. Cards were sent out. Under most circumstances, your first step should be to follow normal procedures at your place of residence. These cards are for those traveling outside their country of residence, if you are facing an urgent need for medical attention. If you have not yet received this blue plastic card with the numbers of your personal ID insurance card, you should contact Aymeric Long of the

Geneva office (longa@who.int) who is trilingual and will be able to help you replace either card.

Pension

This has been an eventful year for the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). Last year, a new Administration/IT system was introduced with many ups and downs during its implementation phase. As has been mentioned in earlier Newsletters, there have been some horror stories in which AFSM was able to intervene to avoid disaster for some PAHO/WHO retirees living in the Americas. Many new retirees were having to wait up to eight months to begin receiving their pensions. Although there is still a backup, UNJSPF has assured us that all efforts are being made to remedy the processes, and it is hoped that things will be back to normal early next year. In the meantime, our PAHO/WHO Federal Credit Union is offering bridge loans to participants in these circumstances. For information, please contact Patricia Vidal Ilijic at pilijic@pahowhofcu.org.

As part of the new system, each participant in the fund has received a new nine-digit ID number (Unique Identification Number). This was sent to everyone on several occasions, the most recent being at the end of September. Please keep this information in a safe place since you will need it for any contact with UNJSPF. The timing of the Certificate of Entitlement (COE), which we receive annually and which must be returned to the UNJSPF to assure them that we are still alive, has been switched to May of each year. Keep your eyes peeled and make sure it gets returned as soon as possible so that you are not in danger of having your pension cut off. Problems can be directed to Raymund Concordia at concordia@un.org who has been most helpful in navigating the system.

With its new IT system, a new website was created, the UNJSPF “Member Self-Service” or MSS, that is accessible at: <http://mss.unjspf.org/Pages/unjspf/index.html>. You can use your new number and access your particular history, check that your CE has been received, etc. You also have access to the history of your pension payments and deductions for the last three years. Also the traditional website is still easily accessible at: http://www.unjspf.org/UNJSPF_Web/. Even without signing in as a user, the forms you may need are readily accessible on the website.

Reminder: the UNJSPF will not take action on any changes without signed originals of the needed forms.

During the year, the UNJSPF, especially its Chief Executive Officer, Sergio Arvizu, has come under a good deal of criticism from some members who were unhappy with the changes in administration, suggesting that the fund might be in danger. Some even circulated petitions to stop the changes. AFSM has seriously investigated these claims, as have other institutions such as The Associations of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS). We have informed you that we believe the rationale behind the protests is not correct, and we have supported the Chief Executive Officer. The UNJSPF Board, on which the retirees have representation, at their annual meeting in July reiterated their support for the Chief Executive Officer and found no difficulties in the management changes. AFSM will continue to monitor, advocate and share our findings with you.

We strongly suggest that you make copies of all of your cards and letters from SHI and UNJSPF and keep them with your important documents. It makes life much easier if you need to contact SHI or the UNJSPF for any reason. **N**

Carnival in São Paulo

By Juan Manuel Sotelo



Arriving in *Guarulhos*, whose airport introduces one to the “*Biggest/Greatest country in the world.*” an expression most surely resulting from the 2014 World Cup, was a show in efficiency, technology, marble, long distances to travel but with automatic transfer paths and mirrors everywhere. Good morning, São Paulo.

São Paulo and its surroundings comprise the largest city in South America, with about 20 million inhabitants. It has the highest GNP of Brazil and it is made up of working people who are accustomed to life in the big city of skyscrapers, with heavy but flowing traffic, a complex but functioning transportation system, and a noticeably less polluted atmosphere than when I visited this city in previous years.

I was quickly led to Higienópolis, the nicest and most charming neighborhood of São Paulo, where I initially would live for the next three months (that was the original idea). I met my friend Rodrigues do Amaral, distinguished member of this society, who received me very warmly. I was welcomed into his home which he let me use as my own even though, a few days after my arrival, he went to the United States for a long period of time. There was nothing that made me think that when I first came in early August 2015 my stay would last for much longer.

The big city has the large artery Avenida 23 de Maio that divides the city. Soon I learned my daily journey, which included the large Ibirapuera Park, the equivalent of Central Park in New York. All along the way to Vila Mariana, where PAHO/WHO’s Latin American and Caribbean Center for Information on Health Sciences (BIREME) is located, I saw tremendous amounts of graffiti along the avenues and tunnels. I don’t believe there is any wall that is free of this urban art, so present and colorful. It would seem that there is an army of muralists here.

Usually they picked me up at 8:00 in the morning, and it took about 15 minutes to reach BIREME. My work was located at Rua Botucatu, near São Paulo Hospital, on the campus of the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP). Returning home, around 5:30 PM, the trip took me about 40 minutes. This dynamic changed about five months later when we moved the office to a more central and enjoyable area. It is now on Rua Vergueiro, at the beginning of the Avenida Paulista, a linchpin of trade and, more importantly, colorful street demonstrations, perhaps from political parties or civil society. On a personal note, I also left the comfortable apartment of my friends the Do Amarals – to not abuse their friendship and where I had lived for six months - and I rented a two-bedroom apartment near the Avenida Paulista and the cultural life of the

Cidade. Since I was just two Metro stops from my new office, I decided not to use the official transport so that at least once a day, on the way there or back, I allowed myself the opportunity to feel the pulse of the city.

If one is born in the State of São Paulo, one is given the name Paulista, but if one is born in the City of São Paulo, the name given is Paulistano. I came to Brazil at a time when there were denunciations and trials for corruption of senior officials. This situation triggered massive protests in the streets of 200 cities, including the largest one in São Paulo.

Helicopters were another factor present in paulistana life, and one heard them circulating overhead starting early in the morning and continuing almost continuously. They say it is the city with the most helicopters in the world. Here in Brazil one frequently hears that theme of being the first in the world.

People here are friendly, relaxed and accustomed to the international. Shopping malls are everywhere, and major international brands have stores and boutiques that give a cosmopolitan air while at the same time one of great economic solvency. Brazil was in a recession at the time I wrote these notes, with negative growth of -1.8% in its GDP, which was not noticeable in everyday life. My friends told me that the real estate market was affected. The truth is that one could see a significant number of new buildings under construction. The Real surpassed 4 per dollar and then went back down.

To be 60 years or older has its charm in this city. Not only does one have preferential treatment in the banks, there is also deference in public transport, which is free for this age group, and for cinema, theater and concert tickets one is charged half price, a very convenient situation from which I often benefited.

One weekend I went to a concert in Sala São Paulo, a splendid theater that functions attached to a train station. Since the result of my Internet consultation before going to a function indicated that the route from my house to the site of the concert was about 25 minutes, I decided, of course, to walk. En route, I had to go through Duque de Caxias Avenue, a broad street with lines of street dwellers sleeping in the street. Although this is commonly seen in São Paulo, there was a higher concentration here, along at least five or six long blocks. I passed through a couple of squares that had a large number of people of color, and the poverty, the smell of marijuana and consumption of alcohol were all quite evident. Next to this area is Cracolândia, a site that is well known for and crowded with drug trafficking of all kinds.

On weekends I always walked to Ibirapuera Park, where I did a few laps of fast-paced walking following a circuit that comprised about three to four miles of lakes and forests - with many people exercising, running, biking, and walking. From there I used to walk to Paulista Avenue, a very important street due to its shops, banks and major shopping malls. That avenue is closed to cars on Sundays for people to exercise. This decision by the mayor has been questioned and resisted by the businesses in the area and by taxi

drivers, as they see it as an interference with their work. The truth is that it is a great support to health and wellness and many people appreciate it.

For work reasons, I have had dealings with the authorities of the prefecture or municipality of São Paulo as well as with the State of São Paulo, each of different political parties, but in a coexistence that works pretty well, given the complexities of context in the country and in the city.

Carnival arrived, and I asked a couple of friends about what these celebrations meant to them. My friend crudely referred to blocked, dirty, smelly streets at the end of each, and he expressed his desire to be outside the country during those dates. His girlfriend, however, said it was a very happy time of year; a time to rest and participate in some of the “blocos” or street parties that took place before and after carnival itself. There was creativity and good moods during the street parties throughout the city. I observed that it was a time for inhibition, joy and wildness. There's like a before and after Carnival, even for businesses and work. Carnival is a "turning point" that everyone understands and waits for; it provides a change from the routine.

The City and State of São Paulo are a concentration of people, wealth, technology, culture, and landscape derived from the Atlantic forest-covered hills with its greenery and lushness, along with the nearby presence of a coast with extensive beaches, firm sand and rich sea. Featured among the sites that I visited in the State of São Paulo during the time I lived there were Santos, Guarujá and Campos de Jordão.

There is a taxi driver, Davimar Masinho, recommended to me by my Amaral friends, who drove me around in private or outside office hours. Masinho is familiar with the environment, even though he himself is not from there but rather from Espírito Santo. He says he moved to São Paulo to root for the Corinthians, one of the local soccer teams. Among his favorite subjects was talking about the city churches, though only the Catholic ones, and about the history of Brazil, particularly of the Brazilian monarchy and the imperial family. Often on a tour he offered to show me this or that church that we come across while out on the road, to which I expressed my gratitude but usually declined. Yes, it gave me an excellent opportunity to practice my Portuguese and to learn of stories about Don Pedro I, or about a princess who while starting her return back to Europe shook the dust off her shoes so that there was nothing left of this land, not even dust. Masinho helped my daughter Ana to tour areas of the city that otherwise would not have been possible, given the short time of her visit.

For my first outing outside the city and on the occasion of the visit of a friend from the United States, I rented a car to go to Campos de Jordão for a few days, leaving from the Guarulhos airport. The car rental experience was not good: without informing me, they changed the model from the one I requested to one without power steering or air conditioning. The whole experience was both a torture and a fitness exercise. Afterwards, I complained to them via the survey that is inevitably sent after using services such as hotels, restaurants or car rentals. For my subsequent trips outside the

city, I resorted to the services of Masinho and his stories. The coast, (i.e., the beaches) is relatively close and I could go some weekends and be brought back after two days.

At the end of a one-month mandatory break after completing my first six months of work, I returned to Sampa, a nickname for São Paulo. It was after Carnival and it seemed like I would just be staying two months - I thought of how lucky I was. However, with extensions to my contract I ended up staying to complete a full year.

I experienced months of intense protest in the streets of São Paulo and throughout the country, some in favor and others against the government and its leaders respectively. The truth is that in the national and international press Brazil is distinguished for issues of corruption, political adjustments and imbalances related to an unparalleled complexity, along with imposition of justice never before seen. Many were taken as political prisoners, and others tried to avoid jail by using immunity protection based on their positions.

Another relatively new topic for me emerged, that of the informer. Snitching consists of denouncing prisoners in exchange for reduced jail time or sentence. This mechanism "adds fuel to the fire" and is a source of frequent revelations about other politicians and authorities denounced for mismanagement and accepting bribes and privileges. I lived through the request for impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff that resulted in her dismissal. This voting process, with its specific timetable, was a painful process for the whole society.

Since I was widowed seven years ago, I have learned to be comfortable with the idea and the practice of going out alone and not losing out on recreational, social or cultural activities without necessarily having to invite someone. I learned to sit at a bar, talk to people, go to a concert or to the beach alone. When first in São Paulo, I struggled with this, but now I am comfortable with it and I have no problems. This situation, together with the fact of my being in a different environment from the one to which I had been accustomed, without a social network and dealing with another language, has been a rather unusual experience, leaving me alone and open like a sponge to live every day intensely.

Upon completing the mission entrusted me, I had to return to Washington, DC. Sampa is part of my personal history, and it was a significant venue among the several where I served when I was an active PAHO/WHO officer. People, colors and flavors, and the diversity of peoples' lives, with their ways and expressions, all contribute to creating "saudades". See you soon, São Paulo, and I hope to go back to you soon as I will always return to sites that I liked so much. **N**

Welcome to new AFSM members

From the Washington, DC area

Timothy Brown
Nancy M. Cabezas
Paul R. Delay
Nabila Ezzeldin Metwalli
Jorge E. Garcés
Erlinda Lopez Newby
Rafael Mazín-Reinoso

From other countries

Alice Elizabeth B. de Alvarez – Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic
Luis Antonio Loyola – Mendoza, Argentina
Flavio Oliveira Pires – Cambui, MG. Brazil
Terezinha G. Oliveira Pires – Cambui, MG. Brazil
Ma. Lucia Graça Silgueiro – Brasilia, DF, Brazil

From other parts of USA

Alberto Barcelo – Miami, Fl
Corinne Brenner – Brooklyn, NY
Ma. Teresa Cerqueira – Miami Beach, Fl
Viola P. Corpus – Brooklyn, NY
Miryam Cruz Olave – Aventura, Fl
James Hill – Saint Augustine, Fl
Kevin Palmer – Honolulu, HI
Katherine Prout – Raleigh, NC
Satya P. Sardana – Old Bridge, NJ

International Day of Older Persons - 1 October

By the editor of the Women's Health and Education Center

(Newsletter Nov 2016; Vol 11, No 11)

The 2016 United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP) will take a stand against ageism by drawing attention to and challenging negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and ageing.



Ageism is a widely prevalent and prejudicial attitude that stems from the assumption that age discrimination, and sometimes neglect and abuse of older persons, is a social norm and therefore, acceptable. It is a reality in some form in all societies and finds expression in individuals' attitudes and in institutional and policy practices, as well as media representation that devalues and excludes older persons. In 2014,

governments around the world adopted a resolution at the Economic and Social Council that recognized ageism as “the common source of, the justification for and the driving force behind age discrimination.”

Such discrimination shapes how older persons are treated and perceived by their societies including in medical settings and workplaces, creating environments that limit older persons' potential and impact their health and well-being. The failure to tackle ageism undermines older persons' rights and hinders their contributions to social, economic, cultural and political life.

Background

The composition of the world population has changed dramatically in recent decades. Between 1950 and 2010 life expectancy worldwide rose from 46 to 68 years, and it is projected to increase to 81 by the end of the century. It should be noted that at present women outnumber men by an estimated 66 million among those age 60 years or over. In this age range, women are nearly twice as numerous as men, and among centenarians

women are between four and five times as numerous as men. For the first time in human history, in 2050 there will be more persons over 60 than children in the world.



Almost 700 million people are now over the age of 60. By 2050, two billion people, over 20 percent of the world's population, will be 60 or older. The increase in the number of older people will be the greatest and the most rapid in the developing world, with Asia as the region with the largest number of older persons and Africa facing the largest proportionate growth.

With this in mind, enhanced attention to the particular needs and challenges faced by many older people is clearly required. Just as important, however, is the essential contribution the majority of older men and women can continue to make to the functioning of society if adequate guarantees are in place. Human rights lie at the core of all efforts in this regard.

The Introduction of New Policies and Programs

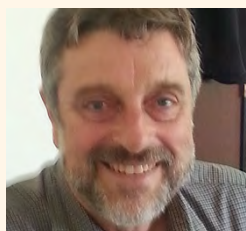
During the last decade, population ageing has led to the introduction of new policies and programs, in which the social sector has taken center stage, as shown by the majority of contributions to the present report. Many governments in developed and developing economies have designed or piloted innovative policies in the health, social security or welfare systems. In addition, several policy framework documents, including national plans of action on ageing have been enacted. Specific age-related legislative measures in areas as varied as building codes, licensing and monitoring of care centers and vocational training have also begun to emerge.

All levels of government, from local to national, have taken a share in this responsibility, and have either created new institutions or renewed existing ones to seek ways of gradually responding to the challenges faced by older persons. **N**

Details: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/66/173

Annual ARAIO workshop

By Hernán Rosenberg



On 26 October, the annual workshop of the Association of Retired Associations of International Organizations of Washington (ARAIO) was held at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In addition to the hosts, participants included representatives of the associations of the OAS, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and PAHO. As always, the AFICS (Association of Former International Civil Servants) was also involved, representing former staff of all the organizations of the United Nations system, with its representatives coming based upon geographic location, independent of its parent organization. In our case, the AFICS Washington Chapter participated, because its US headquarters is in New York, which sent two additional people. This year, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) were also incorporated.

The theme of the meeting this year was: *What is the added value of your association or what does your association do for its members and for its original organization?* To answer this question, a comparative survey was conducted prior to the annual workshop, which is available (in English only) to interested parties who request it from the author.

Our Association is in the middle of the organizations, both in size and in seniority. Our members join voluntarily and pay a membership fee. Some associations automatically incorporate their retirees and they do not pay directly to belong to their association.

In general, associations have union-type programs, such as monitoring of pension and health insurance, as well as social events, ranging from more or less periodic meetings and group activities such as field trips and local clubs, to more intricate ones like cruise trips or tours to Asia or Europe.

With one exception, associations do not participate in the technical activities of the parent organization, although one other association holds monthly meetings of camaraderie in which technical matters are also discussed.

Associations sometimes participate in committees of the parent organization when they relate directly to the interests of their members, as is the case of insurance reviews, but participation tends to be at the individual level rather than as members of their respective association.

Associations tend to represent and support former staff even though they are not members of the association itself, which identifies one of the common problems of associations: the tendency to decline membership. In addition to a certain apathy of new former staff members,

the tendency of the parent institutions to use more short-term contractors and fewer career staff has had a major impact on the associations because these potential members are more interested in establishing professional networks than in the traditional problems of retirees, i.e. typically health and pension. Many former staff members are not entitled to retirement, and associations have to exert a major effort to make their joining more attractive.

All parent organizations are self-insured in health matters. Pensions and their assets are managed by the Joint Fund for all agencies in the United Nations system, and individually by the other organizations.

It is important for members to understand that the rise in the costs of benefits, such as health services, combined with the reduction in general staff and the greater longevity of retirees, are major challenges to ensuring the solvency of these programs. For this reason, adjustments can be observed in benefits that affect members, such as changes in insurance conditions and the recent increase in the mandatory retirement age of the UN system, which increases contribution time and reduces time as retirees. At AFSM, we closely follow these adjustments and inform or mobilize members when necessary.

Most of the parent organizations provide associations of former staff with facilities, connectivity, and some grants. In the case of AFSM, we are in discussions with PAHO to ensure a minimum level of funding.

The associations also coincide in their efforts to incorporate non-HQ resident members into their activities by facilitating the establishment of chapters in different countries and cities.

A major concern has been improvement in communications, migrating contact from postal mail to a more fluid and frequent communication by electronic and mass media means such as Facebook. This requires adaptation on the part of members, especially the elderly. Almost all associations have introduced electronic voting.

There was a consensus among the participants about the importance of these workshops, taking into account the large number of common themes that unite us, and the experiences that can be shared, such as the use of health insurance for older adults in the United States (Medicare) and electronic voting. On the other hand, discussions included how to share activities of general interest and in which there are economies of scale (for example, to share information about possible tours in the future).

AFSM will continue to participate in these important activities and inform the membership about the topics of interest as they arise. **N**

AFSM Colombia Chapter



By Raúl Londoño



The Colombia Chapter's activity focused on keeping the group together through virtual communications and the active participation of the Board of Directors, especially Gloria Briceño, Treasurer, and María Mercedes Rodríguez, Secretary.

Great cooperation was achieved with PWR, Dr. Gina Watson, to streamline health claims, pensions and correspondence processes, as well as the cooperation of the representation for the development of the 2016 annual Chapter meeting.

We created a digital file with the history of the Chapter from its genesis and foundation to date, with documentary contributions from Helena Restrepo, Gustavo Mora and other affiliates. The digitized file will facilitate the sharing of the Chapter's history with the new officers and members.

We personally and economically supported the extraordinary work of the "María es Mi Madre" Foundation.

Through Germán Perdomo, we had a close and fruitful relationship with AFSM that enabled us to update important information and procedures for our members. We sent in two articles from the Chapter for publication in AFSM newsletters.

Based on the treasury status and objectives of the chapter, we developed a work plan for 2016-2017, which includes:

- Promoting solidarity between members and the community, sharing information with the members about health claims, pensions, news from the FCU and other areas of interest.
- Sustaining the exchange links with the PWR office, based on the goodwill of the PWR.
- Continuing to update the records.

We held the 11th Meeting of the Colombia Chapter in Cali from 15 to 18 September 2016. The meeting was held at the Hotel Dann, with an agenda that included a day of work and a day of recreation. The third day was dedicated to connecting with the newly elected members of the chapter's Board of Directors. Participants included 15 out of 37 members (40%) and five spouses. Attendees selected Diego Victoria and Alberto Concha as chairs of the meeting for the morning and afternoon sessions respectively.



Dr. Gina emphasized the continental and global importance of PAHO in all health-related fields, including the Chikungunya and Zika outbreaks. She committed the PWR Office to support the post-conflict period in Colombia, since there are predicted difficulties of communicable diseases in the areas of

concentration. Also, PAHO will be ready to support peacebuilding. She reiterated her willingness to continue collaborating with the new Board in supporting the needs of the Chapter and its members until the end of her mission in Colombia.

Dr. Rodrigo Guerrero made an important and practical presentation on "The Epidemiological Method for Reducing Urban Violence" with which significant results were obtained between 2012 and 2015 in Cali, resulting in a 34% reduction in homicides; 12% in auto theft and 33% in personal injuries.

A virtual conference was held with Germán Perdomo, AFSM President, who updated us on pension fund and health insurance issues that we face on a daily basis. The attendees thanked the AFSM for the collaboration and good relations it has maintained with the Chapter.

Raúl Londoño, the Chapter President for the last three years, thanked the members, the AFSM and the FCU for their collaboration, and he asked the participants to relieve him of his duties.

A new Board of Directors was elected, with Carlos Hernán Daza as President, Luis Jorge Pérez as Vice-President, María Mercedes Rodríguez as Secretary, Nelly Marín as Treasurer, and Diego Victoria and Germán Mora as Members at Large.

The Ccol appointed Helena Restrepo as the AFSM Chapter's representative at the Dominican Republic meeting.

Cartagena or Barranquilla were selected as possible venues for the 2017 meeting; the decision will be made by the Board of Directors.

In the evening we had a nice dinner with a salsa music show offered by the FCU, to which we expressed our gratitude.

We took a trip to Hacienda El Paraíso and the Lord of Miracles in Buga, which was very nice; it gave us the opportunity to share a nice day of friendship.

The last day was dedicated to the transition meeting with the new Board of Directors, which ended with an exquisite lunch in the apartment of Carlos Hernán Daza.

At the conclusion of the meeting we sensed the need to develop a proposal for the survival of the Chapter over time and therefore the need to rethink the mission and objectives, chapter members and funding. Therefore, we will make a proposal, supported by reflection on the outcomes achieved to date and future perspectives.

Hypothesis: Our age, little or no income from new members and the few potential employees who will retire in the next 10 years, would make the chapter become extinct due to lack of membership. This situation would make member participation in chapter activities scarce and therefore financing would begin to decline.

Therefore, we held a debate about the future survival of the chapter, proposing some suggestions for the reform of the by-laws, which we considered would support continuation over time:

1. To remain in the Association of Former Staff Members of PAHO/WHO.
 2. For the benefit of the members and the community, to accept new partners other than the current ones, in accordance with Item 4 of the by-laws, including other professionals who are related to health, have moral and professional prestige, have 20 or more years of experience and who can contribute to the strengthening of the Chapter.
 3. To become a legal entity.
 4. Given the knowledge, experience and prestige of the new partners, include in the objectives of the Chapter the power to contract with public and private entities to implement projects related to the prevention and control of diseases.
 5. Revenues from contracts would be distributed with percentages for the Chapter and professionals participating in each project.
 6. Hold an extraordinary meeting of the members to discuss these and other proposals. **N**
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Olympics: Is Brazil Olympic?

By Luis Carlos Soares and Paulo Cesar Pinto



Long before the candidacy for Rio de Janeiro to be the host city for the 2016 Olympic Games, by the hands of the then President of the Republic and the Rio authorities, doubts arose moving between different points of view ranging from fear of knowing who we are to enthusiasm to demonstrate who we are as Brazilians.

There was not and there is no unanimity, which was better since unanimity is lame and short sighted.

It is only an event, a few said, but the Olympics provide a unique moment of responsible reflection on democratic values, social justice, and human rights. They are also the most important sporting event in the world, with all their complexity of different modalities, the demands of special spaces and professional support, fans, the media, having more countries than the UN and many logistical challenges that include even the Paralympics, which are equally important and even more challenging.

It was not just a simple game of losing and winning; it was a process of creating opportunities, celebrating, promoting citizenship, progressing in building dialogues, and identifying situations with countless problems.

Rio de Janeiro, "the wonderful city," is now a better city, with new urban facilities, airports, metro, important public areas, renovated museums and cultural circuits of quality, renewed and expanded hotel networks, and new or refurbished expressways.

More than this, the "carioca," as the native of Rio is known, participated in the show and even when there was no competing compatriot he turned to applaud the Brazilian judges. It was a happy period with good humor for cariocas, athletes, leaders, guests and tourists that helped them to forget the stains of a city condemned "without trial" for urban violence, the ghost of dengue and zika, and even more so the delicate political situation of the country, the stagnation of growth and the global economic context in which we live.

This whole period of the Olympics and Paralympics paralleled a crisis of citizen and political values that culminated in the dismissal of the President of the Republic and the ascension of the Vice President, a disguised opponent of the President and her party.

Some promises made to the Rio residents by the "Rio 2016" games are still unfulfilled, such as the environmental recovery of the Guanabara Bay, the site of navigation competitions.

Health aspects did not have the expected emphasis in terms of disease prevention, and another major concern, emphasized by the world press, was the mobilization of massive and irresponsible campaigns to control *aedes-aegypti*. Basic sanitation improved a lot, but not enough. Rio continues with slums and social inequalities, despite significant advances, but it is happier, waiting for its new brunette and less poor "girl from Ipanema."



In discussions prior to the games, opinions repeatedly emerged suggesting that it would be better to invest all the money destined for the Olympics in education, health and employment generation. It is easy to imagine that this would never be possible, because new opportunities arose as a result of the games and the interests they sparked. The

resources were not available for the games: they were mobilized with activities mainly related to possible legacies. And these legacies were important, as we have discussed.

Taking stock cannot be done with limitations of structured analyzes that have their positive and negative frameworks, since the dimensions are not linear, the facts are different depending upon different points of view, and the results are seen as better or worse, according to the expectations of each.

Great events move societies around the world and these, as is the case of the Olympics and Para-Olympics, are rare opportunities. If one asks us if we would do everything again, the answer would be **YES**; but in the same way, the answer would be **NO**, because of what we learned and surely we would do **BETTER**. Rio and Rio residents love joy, have a fascination for events that mobilize democratic values and citizen responsibilities and, more than anything else, they love to welcome all who come to visit them. **N**

In Memoriam

DEATHS REPORTED IN 2016
NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED

Fernando Viteri	11 July 2016
Sonia Maria Botti	31 July 2016
Olga Mercado	4 November 2016
Jorge Escalante	9 November 2016

Things to Remember

Your opinion is important

The AFSM Board and committee coordinators would like to know about the needs of its members.

We might not be able to solve all your problems but we have resources that could be utilized. Also, we encourage your contributions to the Newsletter, either in the form of articles for publication or in comments about its contents.

To reach us, send us an email to

perdomog@gmail.com

or collado@verizon.net

You can also write to:

AFSM c/o PAHO

525 23rd Street NW

Washington DC 20037-2895

Contact Information

Please refer to your 2016 AFSM Directory and be certain that all your personal contact information is correct. We also encourage you to provide us with updates of your address, email and telephone, if there are changes, so that the Newsletter and other important information can be

sent to you on time. Any changes or additions to your contact information should be sent to Hortensia Saginor (AFSM) by routine mail to PAHO Headquarters in Washington DC or, preferably, by email to isaginor@aol.com or hortensiasagi@gmail.com

PAHO/WHO AFSM Web link:

<http://www.afsmpaho.com>, and to register please use your email address as your ID and as password use: **Paho1902!**

To become member of the Facebook page of AFSM

Go to: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/230159803692834/>



The Back Page

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