



# NEWSLETTER

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THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PAHO/WHO STAFF MEMBERS

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*Caribbean Christmas Party 2022*

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## Editorial

*Be Dare!*

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*By Gloria Coe*



Former staff who created the Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members (AFSM) in 1990, described their memories of working together at PAHO as being “*like a life lived with a ‘family’ which we cannot and should not erase from our hearts.*”

Those of us on the Board have the wonderful privilege of supporting our AFSM family, as stated in our Vision – “*to enjoy the maximum level of fellowship and wellbeing*”. As members of the Board, we express with gratitude the same sentiments of a life lived with a family that we will not erase from our hearts. Working on behalf of the older generation of our PAHO family keeps those memories alive in each of us and enriches our lives beyond measure.

As some members of the Board begin their 9<sup>th</sup> decade, their plans are to resign in December 2023 to give younger AFSM members the opportunity to support the older generation of our family.

We note with pride that one member has been either a member of the Board or a volunteer for more than 25 years, several others for more than 20 years. Some members of the Board have offered to resign and continue as volunteers in order to give younger members the opportunity to lead our efforts of enjoying the maximum level of fellowship and wellbeing.

Our AFSM Bylaws specify Board Members are elected in rotating groups for a three-year term, and each year three of the nine members are elected. To this end, we encourage you to seize this opportunity to become a candidate for the 2024 Board and thereby enrich the best years of your life that are yet to come.

Please note below the calendar for our 2023 elections for the 2024 Board and join us.

*Be Dare!*

## Calendar for the Election of the Board of Directors AFSM 2024

**25 August:** The AFSM Board announces the 2023 Election Process.

**15 September:** AFSM Members are invited to nominate candidates for the Board election.

**5 October:** The Board informs members of the nominated candidates and invites everyone to participate in the General Election to select the Board.

**30 October:** The results of the General Election are announced by the Board.



### *Welcome to New Members of AFSM*

**From Brazil, Agnes Soares Da Silva**

**From Brazil, Otavio F.P. Oliva**

**From El Salvador, Maria Dolores Perez**

**From Peru, Nancy Violeta Egusquiza Valverde**

**From USA, Jeannette Chichizola**

**From USA, Linda Kintzios**

**From USA, Pilar Vidal Esteves**

# Staff Health Insurance and Pension Update

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*By Carol Collado and Rolando Chacón*

## Health Insurance



As we move into another year, COVID is still with us, although perhaps seen as less threatening because we have developed vaccines which are effective in lessening the severity of the disease and treatments that lessen the severity of the disease. In the US, the state of emergency related to COVID will be lifted in May, however, WHO states that there are too many uncertainties and gaps to declare the pandemic over yet. Some are speculating that COVID will become an annual vaccination such as the flu.



Despite the more relaxed isolation rules, there is still a concern about a series of different symptoms known as “long-covid”. The more that is being learned about this condition, the more reason to avoid becoming infected with COVID in the first place. There is no known causal relation yet as to who will develop long-COVID and who will not. It does not seem to be related with the seriousness or length of the original infection, and increasingly, we are learning that it affects many systems, not just the respiratory one as was originally thought. Once again, the conclusion is that each of us is responsible for calculating our own risks and taking appropriate actions: are you in the fragile groups affected by age, co-existing conditions, susceptibilities, or are you in close contact with any friend or family member who fits into those groups. If so, then you would want to be particularly careful in places where a large number of persons are found and continue to self-protect by wearing masks, frequent hand washing, etc. Coincidentally, since we are in flu season, it could also protect you there. On that front, there is good news. It appears that the vaccines against the flu are more effective this year than in the past. There is also good news coming regarding a combined at-home-test for COVID, the flu, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), that can assist in reducing needless anxiety, contagion, and uncertainty.

You should have all received several documents from SHI Governance in the past two months. The first, in mid-January, highlighted the changes in the SHI Rules effective as of 1 January 2023. The second one, at the beginning of February, highlighted improvements in coverage for mental health services; and it noted the retiree representative elections coming up this year with the introduction of online voting. This edition also had valuable information on fraud, cash payments, and overpriced billing. These newsletters from SHI HQ are valuable and it is highly recommended that they be read.

### Resolutions?

We all know that being active, eating healthily, and socializing are important to being able to live well and enjoy life. Additionally, maintaining oneself hydrated has been noted with increased importance and something we need to remember, especially in the southern hemisphere where temperatures and outdoor activities increase.

Finally, just for fun, a recent group of interviews across the globe with people over age 100 produced the following recommendations for a long life:

- Wake up with purpose and remind yourself of the things you do well.
- Find a passion and follow it.
- If you can't do anything about it, don't worry about it.

- Keep handy an up-to-date and working bullshit-detector – you will need it many times.
- Laugh at yourself, have good sense of humor.
- Keep your eyes open and notice what’s happening around you.
- Keep your mind active. Read, travel, enjoy music, play games, organize family activities, etc.
- Don’t follow the crowd. Boredom will get you in trouble ... stay busy.
- Treat others well and do the right thing.
- Volunteer and help others - it will make you feel good.
- and the best of all: **My secret to a long life is to keep breathing.**

## **Pension**

### **73rd Pension Board Session (16-17 February 2023)**

Ms. Rosemarie McClean, Chief Executive of Pension Administration, highlighted some of the achievements of the administration that included 93.3% of separation cases being processed within 15 days and pension payments having continued to be paid on time. She also provided updates on the Digital Certificate of Entitlement application.

Mr. Pedro Guazo, Representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the Fund’s assets, indicated that 2022 was a very volatile year. Despite a decrease by 14.4% in 2022 of the market values of the Fund’s assets, less than in the overall global markets, and a recovery of almost 5% so far in 2023, the assets remain above the benchmark of 3.5% real rate of return, thus ensuring the financial sustainability of the Fund.

The UN General Assembly approved amendments to articles 1 and 24 of the Pension Fund to allow restoration of all or partial contributory services in the case of deferred retirement benefits.

For more information about the 73rd Pension Board sessions visit their website:

<https://www.unjspf.org/newsroom/>

### **UN Joint Staff Pension Fund’s (UNJSPF) Digital CE Option (DCE)**

We are receiving messages from the Pension Fund Digital CE team encouraging everybody to go digital. The Fund is implementing a mobile phone app for retirees to have the option to send their Certificate of Entitlement through the app instead of the paper-based form. Please note that this is just an option, which means that the paper option or the printed CE from MSS are still available.

For more information about your options, you can visit their website:

<https://www.unjspf.org/newsroom/retirees-and-beneficiaries-second-mailing-of-the-2022-certificate-of-entitlement/>



## **Staff Health Insurance (SHI) ELECTIONS for Retiree Representatives**

By now those of you served by the WHO/PAHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI) have received several emails inviting the former PAHO/WHO staff to present their candidacy to represent retirees on the two committees which are the governance structure of SHI. AFSM believes that electing strong candidates is an important responsibility of each of us. As background for the May-July voting, we present a brief overview of the governance structure of WHO-SHI.

The two committees, which work closely with the SHI Secretariat, and combine to exercise governance are the Global Oversight Committee (GOC) and the Global Standing Committee (GSC). Each committee consists of representatives and alternates representing administration and participants in equal numbers. Both HQ and Regions are considered in the administration and staff association participants and the retirees globally elect their representatives. An overall balance of skills and experience in medicine, finance, human resources, and health care finance is sought, and when indicated, in house and external consultation can be sought. Retirees have 2 representatives to the GOC, and 2 representatives and two alternates to the GSC. They are selected by global election for a 4-year term.

The Global Standing Committee's principal functions have to do with the SHI Rules. This includes: applying Rules and taking decisions on cases, continual monitoring to identify needed Rule changes or clarifications according to the changing global public health and insurance panoramas, proposing indicated changes, and providing guidance to support the SHI Officers. Monthly or bi-monthly meetings are held virtually with a rotating time schedule to assure global inclusion.

The Global Oversight Committee oversees the SHI and advises the Director General on SHI management and operations. The oversight responsibilities include assuring a balance between level of benefits, contributions, cost containment, and consistency with Rules and guiding principles. The committee reviews annual performance of the SHI/GSC, the adequacy of the WHO SHI Secretariat's direction and management. They maintain awareness of the best practices of comparable health insurance plans. A large component of their work involves maintaining financial stability and adequacy of the financial reserve of SHI: reviewing internal and external audit reports and monitoring recommendations, examining the SHI investment strategy with the Advisory Investment Committee, organizing, approving and reviewing actuarial studies and, based on all of the above, recommending to the Director General changes and implementation measures to maintain an effective, financially sound SHI. The GOC usually meets in person or virtually twice a year.

In the past, given the need to attend the meetings in person, the two places on each committee were filled by colleagues in Geneva. The move to virtual meetings has made the residence in Geneva almost irrelevant. We think it is very important that the situations of our fellow retirees should always be considered in the committee's deliberations. For this reason, we ask you to first, make sure that you vote, and second, that your vote is not diluted with other regional ones. We supported the election of our own Carol Collado in the last round of elections, and she won a position as a GSC alternate. Once we see the nominations for the positions, we will make suggestions as to the best use of your vote. Accordingly, please be attentive to all communications on this topic, and please let us know if you have any questions about this process.

# Techno Tips: Practical Application of Artificial Intelligence

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*By AFSM and ChatGPT*

ChatGPT is an innovative artificial intelligence system designed to help us communicate with machines in a more natural and efficient way. With its advanced language processing capabilities, ChatGPT can understand human language and generate meaningful responses, making it an invaluable tool for a wide range of applications. For example, you might ask it to write a draft letter, poem, story or book chapter; describe a situation or challenge; or do research on any topic you choose.

For a former employee of the World Health Organization, ChatGPT can be particularly useful in maintaining cognitive function and overall wellbeing. As we age, it becomes increasingly important to engage in activities that challenge the mind and keep it active. By using ChatGPT, retirees can practice communication and problem-solving skills, both of which are essential for maintaining cognitive health.

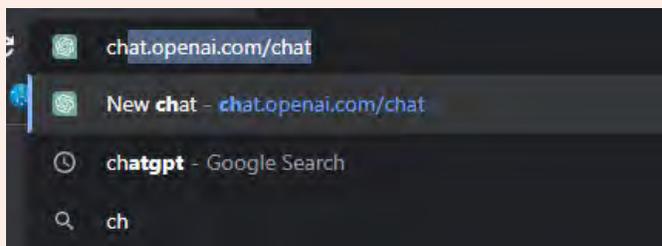
One of the key benefits of using ChatGPT is its ease of use. Retirees who may not be as proficient in technology can easily interact with the system by simply typing or speaking their questions or concerns. ChatGPT will then provide relevant responses and insights, allowing retirees to stay informed and engaged with the world around them.

In addition to supporting cognitive health, using ChatGPT can also benefit retirees by promoting self-sufficiency and independence. As we age, it's not uncommon to experience physical limitations or mobility issues that can make it difficult to perform everyday tasks. ChatGPT can provide guidance and support in a variety of areas, from managing medication schedules to finding local resources for assistance.

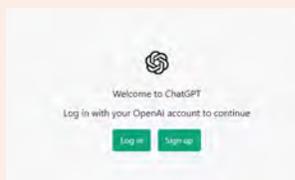
By enabling retirees to access information and resources on their own, ChatGPT can also help them maintain a sense of control over their own health and wellbeing. This sense of empowerment is crucial for individuals of all ages, but it can be particularly important for retirees who may feel more vulnerable or dependent on others for support.

Overall, ChatGPT is a powerful tool that can benefit retirees in a variety of ways. By promoting cognitive health, self-sufficiency, and independence, it can help retirees maintain a high quality of life and stay engaged with the world around them. As technology continues to evolve, tools like ChatGPT will become increasingly important in supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals of all ages.

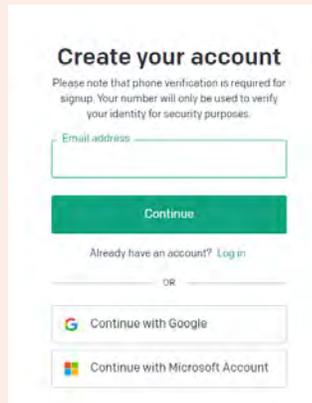
If you would like to start using ChatGPT, Go to the address bar of your browser and type **chat.openai.com/chat**



Click **Enter**



Click on **Sign up**



Type your email address and click **Continue**

Then follow the instructions on the screen.

Overall, the most important thing when it comes to learning how to use ChatGPT is to take it slow and be patient. It may take some time to become comfortable with this new technology, but with practice and the right resources, anyone can learn to use ChatGPT effectively. As an example, *this text was created by ChatGPT and authors limited their role to posing pertinent questions and providing comments.*

Please let us know what your impressions are of this proposed technology. Have you used ChatGPT? If so, what has been your experience? Please send your feedback to Stan's attention at [afsmpho@gmail.com](mailto:afsmpho@gmail.com).

If you are looking for literature to help retired people use ChatGPT, there are a few resources that can be helpful.

### Resources

- "The Senior's Guide to Computers" by Kevin Wilson: This book is specifically geared towards seniors who are new to computers and technology. It covers the basics of using a computer, including how to navigate the internet, use email, and communicate with others online. This book is a great starting point for those who may not be comfortable with technology.
- "Technology Made Simple for the Technical Challenged" by Terry Gardner: This book is another great resource for seniors who may not be tech-savvy. It covers a wide range of topics, including how to use social media, online shopping, and digital devices. It also includes tips on how to stay safe online and protect personal information.
- Online Tutorials and Videos: There are many online tutorials and videos that can be helpful for learning how to use ChatGPT. YouTube has many videos that can walk through the process of interacting with ChatGPT, and some websites offer step-by-step guides and tutorials for using artificial intelligence systems.
- ChatGPT Support and Documentation: Some providers of ChatGPT may offer support and documentation specifically designed for seniors or individuals with low IT proficiency. For example, Microsoft offers a range of resources for seniors, including an online portal specifically designed for seniors who may be new to technology.



# Caribbean Christmas Party 2022

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*By Mena Carto*



At 7 PM Washington time on the evening of 14 December 2022, 20 former PAHO staff members who had worked in the Caribbean got together to have a virtual party. The party was riotous to say the least - it was an occasion of lively chaos that was enjoyed by all!!



***AND IT ALL HAPPENED IN CYBER SPACE!!!***

The requirements for joining the party were that you had to wear something Christmassy, have a drink in hand, and turn on your camera and microphone. The ‘party’ was now becoming an annual event having had two wildly successful parties during the previous two Christmases. Yvette Holder, Caribbean Focal Point, who had organized those past two parties, was regrettably very busy during Christmas 2022, so I volunteered to coordinate it. Cancelling the party would have been unheard of – it would have amounted to ‘blasphemy’ by every single measure.

Among the 20 were six former PWRs and a motley crew of former technical and support staff who had worked in various Caribbean offices – the Bahamas, Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad. We were also honored to have the presence of Director Emeritus Sir George Alleyne, whose birth country is Barbados. Mirta Roses, who had worked at CAREC for a number of years, was regrettably absent due to a family commitment. Mona Khanna, who was all the way in the UK and who had declined the virtual invite due to the time difference, could not resist the urge to join the party; she stayed awake up to midnight UK time to join us.

The party started with its incessant chattering! Everyone was spilling over with news about himself/herself since we last ‘met’ and it was difficult to get a word in sideways. We were just so happy to see each other!!

Some of the outfits were hilarious! Peter Carr wore his previous year's Trinidad carnival headdress and regaled us with stories about his annual carnival exploits. He continues to make this annual pilgrimage to his homeland Trinidad to participate in his beloved carnival – even as he nears his ninth decade of life. Veta Brown wore head gear that she had donned at a Christmas lunch during the season. At a glance she looked as if she was wearing her Christmas tree on top of her head, but she sure looked festive!!



Ton Vlugman, who was on assignment in the deep Surinamese jungle had to climb a tree to get some internet connection; he kept drifting in and out of the conversation from time to time.



George Alleyne regaled us with stories of his gardening adventures and spoke at length about his begonias, tomatoes, and lettuce. Sam Rawlins, who spoke proudly of his huge farm, was the self-appointed 'consultant/adviser' on gardening issues and shared his extensive knowledge about the intricacies of cultivation. It was interesting trying to picture these two highly learned health specialists dabbling in the mud, trying to bring life to foliage on this occasion – having spent most of their lives trying to preserve human lives.



And so the conversations went on even after we renewed our Zoom connection after being bumped off after the first free 45 minutes. The husband of one retired staff member jokingly lamented that his wife has even less time for him now than when she was working for PAHO – she is ALWAYS busy doing something! Another former staff member spoke of her artistic endeavors, her dabbling in painting and other forms of art, among others. She was clearly a very multi-talented and still a very feisty lady. Fred Nunes, another long-lost former staff member who we managed to 'unearth' for the first time spoke at length about

his continued passionate pursuit of pro-choice rights in relation to sexual and reproductive health.

While some of the attendees were quiet listeners most of the time, they chipped in here or there with a jocular jab or a gentle comment. A particularly hilarious moment was when one attendee confessed that his limited ability to type only allows him to ‘look and jukk’ – look at the keyboard and jab at the letters.

There was however one solemn moment during the proceedings when we paused to observe a minute’s silence for the passing of former staff members Janice Welch (Trinidad) and Lorraine Reid (Barbados) who departed this life during 2022. This served as a somewhat somber reminder that we are all here on Mother Earth for an indeterminate period and go we must when our time comes... May Janice and Lorraine’s souls Rest in Peace.

Somewhere along the way, before the party ended, Yvette led us in singing ‘Jingle Bells’. And just before the free Zoom was about to bump us off for the second time, we sang ‘We Wish you a Merry Christmas’. The resulting sounds were a merry cacophony given the varying rates of internet transmission from the different country locations. To say that the party was pure bedlam would be an understatement! But it was just so much fun getting together!



Until next time...

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



# Caring for a Person with Disabilities

## *My Experience Living and Caring for My Son after Traumatic Brain Injury*

*By Maria Teresa Cerqueira*



One Sunday morning on 14 June 1998, Daniel, my oldest son, answered a phone call, and in an attempt to spare me from the awful news, he asked me to go with him to Washington, DC because he needed a book that was only available in a particular bookstore. I was a bit upset because I had a luncheon with colleagues at my house in Fairfax, Virginia, but it was early and I went with him. Instead of the bookstore he took me to the George Washington University Hospital. Then he told me that Enrique, his brother, my youngest son, suffered a road injury and was in the emergency room. That night Dr. Anthony Caputy, neurosurgeon at the Hospital, told us they could not control the pressure in Enrique's head. My son had a traumatic brain injury (TBI), he had surgery, suffered a stroke, and was transferred to the neurology intensive care unit at the Hospital. After that life changed for me; it has been a roller-coaster ride. Being his mother, advocate, and legal guardian, finding the best care, accessing the best therapies, and changing the house for wheelchair access has been a permanent challenge. I have been living and caring for my son since his road injury when he was 18 years old. At the time of the injury, I was told he might die without surgery, but it was dangerous, and it could result in him becoming a vegetable.

But against all odds, Enrique is very much alive, not a vegetable, uses a wheelchair, has difficulty with short term memory, repeats questions or comments, and still clings to hope that he will recover and play soccer. During the weeks and months that he was in the hospital, I spent hours at night reviewing internet sites from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), searching for information about TBI. I could not sleep, searching for how to care for my son, He was in a coma, and I was able to have him moved to the Brain Injury Unit at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in DC. He remained in a coma for many months. Many colleagues, friends, and my sisters, came bringing Enrique stuffed animals and food at home. I will never forget the support that I received from so many. It got me through many tough days. Later that year, NIH had a consensus conference on TBI<sup>3</sup> and I attended all sessions, taking notes, oblivious of the tears streaming down my cheeks! When he came out of the coma, he was transferred to an assisted living facility in Manassas. I went to see him every day after work and his brother Daniel went to see him when he could. But his room always smelled of urine, and since he was mostly in bed we decided to take him home and find help to care for him there. I then enrolled him in daily physical therapy.

From my 20 years of experience, my first recommendation is **be informed**. Collect information about the patient's condition and discuss issues with others involved in the care of that person. This helps to inform health decisions and improve understanding about any challenges the family might face. Be aware of signs of mental or physical issues and mistreatment or abuse.

**Find caring assistants.** We found a wonderful man from Sri Lanka, who was a professional in his country. He had taken courses to be a personal assistant, while studying to renew his credentials. He helped Enrique finish high school, took him to museums, and helped him read many great books. Enrique had a love of reading from an early age and kept a journal since he was 12. After completing his high school requirements, he took many classes at the Northern Virginia Community College and then completed the associate degree at El Paso Community College where we moved for my work. He has a great sense of humor and loves to go out, anywhere is good! He is very independent, showers and dresses by himself.

We got a van with a ramp for the power wheelchair. At home and traveling, the manual wheelchair is best, as many places don't have ramps.

**Get Support.** Family members and friends can provide support in a variety of ways and often want to help. Determine what activities they can do to be of assistance. Join a local or online support group; it may help combat the isolation and fear that may be experienced as a caregiver. There are local and national groups that provide services, recreation, and information for people with disabilities. Friends, family, health care providers, support groups, community services, and counselors are just a few of the people available to help you and your family. My colleagues, family, friends, and neighbors were invaluable support. Many colleagues came by the hospital to see Enrique and stayed and kept me company. I went to classes at a local support center, the "Independence" in Virginia to learn how to transfer and care for him, and also Ester who assisted me at home, to keep us from falling or hurting our backs, and to help Enrique transfer to a bath chair and from manual to power chair. I also went to many activities where providers gave much helpful information.

**Be an Advocate.** Caregivers who are effective advocates may be more successful at getting better service. Ask questions. When the person with a disability uses a wheelchair and wants to go on vacation, find out if the hotel has rooms and bathrooms accessible for the wheelchair. If you want to go to the pool or the beach, ask if it's wheelchair accessible - if there are ramps, walkways, or other equipment. Also find this out when you take the disabled person to parks, concert halls, and museums. If the person with a disability has a specific allergy, inform and remind assistants. Document and know the medical history of the person with a disability and keep this information current. If you live in the US, become familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and other state and national provisions; know how and when to apply them to your situation. Become familiar with similar legislation or policies in other countries. My sisters visited me often, as well as friends from Mexico, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and many other countries. Many supported my work caring for Enrique. As a Staff Member of PAHO/WHO I had extraordinary and exceptional support for travel and time to be at the hospital. I am grateful for the understanding and help from my bosses and colleagues, and for the great support system the PAHO health insurance provided – all of which kept me sane and economically stable.

**Be Empowered.** Focus on what you and the person with a disability *can* do. Find appropriate milestones and celebrate them. If someone asks you questions about the disabled person, let him or her answer when possible. Empower and encourage the individual to engage with others. When appropriate, teach the disabled person to be as independent and as self-assured as possible. Always keep health and safety issues in mind. We made several modifications to the house, with ramps and accessible bathrooms, kitchen, and sidewalks to the backyard. Enrique had a dog before he was hurt, Morgan, and he died from cancer at age 14, so we went to the Fairfax Animal Shelter and adopted a yellow lab which Enrique named Sparky; they immediately bonded. Enrique also wanted to continue studying, so we encouraged him in Virginia and when we moved, he continued studying at the El Paso Community College and completed his Associate's degree in 2011. He continued on to The University of Texas in El Paso, but had difficulty as he insisted on a pre-veterinary degree. He continued taking classes but did not graduate. I retired and moved to Miami in 2016, where he continued studying at Miami Dade College. He spoke about starting a business, and an extraordinary counselor encouraged him to focus on entrepreneurship, so Enrique completed the Certificate in Entrepreneurship at the Business College.

**As a caregiver, take care of yourself.** Caring for a family member with a disability can put a strain on even the strongest caregiver. Staying healthy is important. Maintain personal interests, hobbies, and friendships. Don't let caregiving consume your entire life. This is not healthy for you or those you care for. Don't try to be the perfect caregiver. Set reasonable expectations to lower stress; this helps be a more effective caregiver. Delegate some caregiving tasks to other reliable people. Take short breaks, like an evening walk or relaxing bath. Long breaks are nurturing. Mental and emotional health, as well as

exercising and eating healthy are important. In addition to have other people around him, and taking him to many places, I take care of myself eating healthy, keeping a healthy weight. I also do about an hour of exercise a day walking and swimming.

**Support them to be independent.** It may be tempting for caregivers to help the brain injury survivor with everything, but this can harm the long-term recovery. During TBI recovery, therapy will focus on rebuilding neural pathways in the brain. By reinforcing these pathways, some of the abilities lost after the injury can be recovered. This is neuroplasticity, and it's one of the main ways that the brain repairs itself after an injury. To activate neuroplasticity, the person must engage in repetitious activity. For example, to relearn how to use one's hands, one needs to perform activities using one's hands. Therefore, if a caregiver does everything for the person, the brain will not receive the stimulation it requires. This will prevent him/her from engaging neuroplasticity and can stall recovery. Try to give the person with a brain injury independence, while encouraging participation in therapy. Try to remind him/her to do exercises for at least a few minutes every day. TBI survivors who experienced a frontal lobe injury often struggle with planning ahead and staying on task. As a result, they usually cannot take the initiative to do their therapy on their own. Try to remind them to do their exercises for at least a few minutes every day. At first Enrique could not even hold a fork and spoon while eating. But we persevered in giving him back the fork and spoon and let him repeat this task, he got better and now feeds himself. We also allowed him to shower by himself. Once the bathroom was accessible it took some practice, but now he takes showers by himself and dresses himself. He also learned to transfer himself from the chair to the exercise "table". We encouraged him to do his rehab exercises and now he does them every day, and often several times a day. We had parallel bars put in and he walks safely several times a day. He also exercises on the recumbent bicycle with some Velcro straps to hold the left foot, as Enrique has a left side paralysis.

**Be Patient with Emotional Difficulties.** Brain injury can cause several emotional or behavioral issues, particularly after a frontal lobe injury. The person might struggle with severe mood swings, or behave impulsively, and might even display a lack of empathy or consideration for others. This can be frustrating. Most problems usually arise because the person cannot cope with an issue. Therefore, if the person becomes irritable or suddenly unreasonable, stay patient and don't react. He/she might be in pain or exhausted; there could be excessive noise or confusion. He/she might just need to be left alone for a few minutes. Address it by remaining calm and keeping the situation from escalating.

Enrique has a desire to walk again and play soccer and to drive to many different places, I don't encourage it but I don't tell him it is not possible, it's been more than 20 years from the road injury, and he has made many strides, against all odds. He also gets very agitated if we tell him eating so much empty calorie foods is not good for him. He loves fries, chips, cookies, and sodas. I have caffeine free, zero sugar or diet sodas and encourage him to more of these and a lot of water. He is vegetarian and eats a many fruits and vegetables as well whole grains.

**Understand the Invisible Side of Brain Injury.** Often people think brain injuries manifest as physical problems, paralysis, or difficulties walking or speaking. However, many TBI symptoms are not easily detected. As a result, it can be tempting to think the person is fine when in fact he/she is not. Fatigue, depression, anxiety, and cognitive deficits can all be manifest in subtle ways. Learning the various cognitive secondary effects of brain injury can help you to be more patient and take better care of the person with a brain injury.

**Overcome Communication Barriers.** Write things down. Memory problems are a significant issue after a brain injury. Write important information somewhere the person can easily see. Maybe keep a whiteboard in each room and write every appointment for the day on it. Also place sticky notes on the microwave or coffee pot with precise instructions on how to use them. All this will help the person become

more independent and take some responsibility. Memory and reasoning impairment; balance and sight changes; difficulty with communication, expression, and understanding, may all be issues. Depression, aggression, anxiety, personality changes, and inappropriate behavior may also be issues.

Enrique and I have conversations and joint activities; we eat dinner together and he often plays games such as UNO, and other table games with his nephew and two nieces, and many times with all of us. Since COVID 19 my oldest son, Daniel, his wife Raine, and their three children (my grandchildren) decided to live with us in the same house. This has been of great support as Enrique now has many family members to ask repeated questions! Enrique gets along well with everyone and enjoys the many family members and friends that come to visit.

**Cheer Them On.** Encouragement is vital during brain injury rehab. Celebrate every accomplishment and focus on the positives more than the negatives. Our attitudes and beliefs shape our actions. If the disabled person only focuses on the negative, he/she will feel like therapy and exercise are useless. They need support. Enrique has a reclining bicycle that he uses often, and parallel bars built in the yard where he walks several times a day. He also loves to ride on his powerchair around the neighborhood, feeding the peacocks and enjoying meeting and talking with neighbors.

**Provide Emotional Support.** Many brain injury patients face devastating losses that can compromise their sense of freedom. This may explain why over 50% of TBI survivors experience depression. The disabled person might react to grief in different ways, by withdrawing from others or becoming more irritable and frustrated. We provide Enrique with lots of emotional support, and we understand that many emotions are part of the healing process. We don't force him to feel or act in any particular way, or to participate in any or all activities. He has dinner with the family; except when the Mets and the NY Giants are playing, since he likes to see them play. I often take him to the games when it's within a reasonable distance. I also take him to the movies where he meets up with friends. My sisters often take him out for lunch.

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## Musings of an Ageing Woman, Part 8

### You moved!

*By Yvette Holder*



So, you have ignored my foolish advice and moved in with your daughter and her family, or your son and his family. And by the way, different dynamics play out in each situation, but we'll come to that later. Perhaps a better solution can't be found, and this is the best option for everyone. In which case, preparations must be made. Just as a home is prepared for the arrival of a baby, the same must be done for the arrival of The Parents!!

Admittedly, it is unlikely that Mami or Papi will stick their hands into the electrical sockets, but they do present some more challenging hazards. Firstly, the rugs and mats that decorate the home, unless well-secured or under a heavy piece of furniture, are an accident waiting to happen to someone walking with a cane. And those three/four-piece toilet sets that make the bathroom look so pretty, especially when color-coordinated with the shower curtain and towels sets, they have to go, for both safety and health reasons. I must admit that throwing those out when I "elderized" my own home, did hurt a little. And since we are in the bathroom, let me say that shower stalls are a must, while tubs are a very dubious maybe, unless you get one of those step-in baths with a seat and the jets for a true spa experience. The bathroom floor throughout (not just the washing area, be it tub and/or shower) must not be smooth. A nice textured, preferably pebbled, floor is critical for fall prevention. As are grab bars. Speaking from personal experience, falls occur in slow motion with lots of opportunity for flailing hands to desperately clutch anything, even something as useless as a shower curtain. Strategically placed, grab bars (don't forget near the toilet too) are another must.

Talking about furniture – their location must be seriously considered when the elders move in. Little accent pieces scattered throughout the room become obstacles. At the same time, solid furniture around the periphery of the room is an aid. Should parents fall, they could crawl to it and pull themselves up. And don't forget solid chairs that have armrests so they could propel themselves from sitting to standing. A more expensive alternative is the self-rising chair. I know I had a great laugh at the "Frankie and Grace" episode where Jane Fonda threw a towel around a statue to get herself up from the toilet. This led her to design a self-rising toilet seat in a subsequent episode. I still think it would have been a hit if they had made it to "Shark Tank".

For Parents who still like to cook, there are pros and cons. For the children, they get to come home to a prepared hot meal and to enjoy the dishes of their childhood without the effort. The downside is that the parents may be suffering from arthritis or carpal tunnel or just be weak,

and thus they can no longer grasp things as before. As a result, utensils slip out of the hand, jars are difficult to open, and so on. In short, there is a tendency to be what would be considered clumsy but it is simply the reality of old age. The solution is to use unbreakable ware – steel and plastic vessels, metal or silicone baking dishes and jars, whether for storage or for purchased goods. There is nothing worse than trying to open a glass jar and when you finally succeed, it flies out of your grasp to crash and break on the floor! By the way, a caution with the silicone dishes – when full, they need to be supported.

For elders, as with property, it's all about location, location, location. The Parents' room should either have an ensuite or be in very close proximity to a bathroom that should not be shared. You have no idea of the agony of waiting for a bathroom that is being occupied by a grandchild. Of course, the ideal for the parents is a MOM (master on the main). That negates the need for a chair lift to assist the parents in navigating the stairs, gives them their independence, and you your privacy. My schoolfriend had the perfect solution – she built her mom a dowager tiny home in her backyard.

So, are preparations completed with everything in place? On the children's side, check the grab bars, the non-skid floor, uncluttered and unimpeded pathways through the house, the chair lift, the self-rising chairs, the steel utensils, and Melmac dishes and plastic containers instead of glass. On the Parents' side, check the attitude - see and don't see, hear and don't hear, and when speaking, do not criticize. Offer to help but do not be offended if the offer is refused. Remember this household has been functioning for years without your intervention, so ask first before undertaking any household activity, especially if the child you will be living with is your son. Daughters-in-law can be very touchy about the management of their households and can easily resent what they perceive as interference or criticism. If it is your daughter, be on guard for any signs of coolness and check in with her to ensure that you are not causing any difficulty. Presumably you are comfortable enough with each other that she will alert you if your behavior is causing problems. If you are not, then develop that relationship as soon as you move in. And whichever child you are living with, DO NOT criticize the spouse to them. If your child wants to vent, then listen, soothe, and reassure that you are there to support but do not add to the rant. Now, you, the Parents, are ready to move in and enjoy the grandchildren. There is nothing better than watching your children having to be the recipients of what they had dished out to you!



# My New Trip to Argentina and Chile

*By Marilyn Rice*



I had signed up for a trip to Patagonia with the touring company Overseas Adventure Travel over three years ago – and then Covid hit, and I kept rescheduling it until finally, in December 2022, I was able to take the trip. There were 23 of us from all different parts of the US, and we had a wonderful trip leader from Ushuaia, Argentina. We started the trip in Buenos Aires where, among other things, we had a tango lesson during which I learned about the bandoneon instrument, which I thought was a small accordion – how uninformed I was. It was fun but I am not going to win any prizes. Then we



gathered in the bar of our hotel to watch the Argentina vs Australia quarterfinals of the World Cup Soccer Tournament. It was an exciting game and Argentina won – one step closer to winning the cup and a harbinger of things to come. It seemed like the whole city was celebrating in the streets. Our all-day bus tour took us to the major sites around town with commentary about the history and meaning of each, including the Caminata in La Boca – the first merchant and fishing port now peppered with tango performers and painters, the obelisk that had an enormous soccer ball made out of



plastic bottles in the Argentinian colors to commemorate the World Cup - a gathering place for city dwellers to celebrate special events, the May Square by the Pink (government) House where mothers and grandmothers have been gathering since 1977 to protest the disappearance of their

children and grandchildren during the time of the military government, a conversation in a coffee house with Mariano Corvachos who made a film about the terror experienced during the dictatorship (shown throughout the country, followed by discussions with the audiences – shining a light on contributions made by the military and civil society) (Watch the movie clicking the following link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEVUYEo0\\_Tc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEVUYEo0_Tc&feature=youtu.be)), a Sunday walk through the artist street market in San Telmo with purchases I swore I would not make, a visit to the famous Café Tortoni (founded in 1858) where I partook of hot chocolate and churros filled with caramel (dolce de leche) and finally dinner at the house of a local resident to discuss local and national issues from that family's perspective.

The next day we flew to Calafate, over three hours south of Buenos Aires. The contrast could not have been greater – from a large bustling city to a desert-like terrain with few people living per square meters<sup>1</sup>, high winds, snowcapped mountains, and beautiful glacial lakes. For 65 million years the land here has been raised by chaotic volcanic



eruptions and carved by massive glaciers, creating a series of jagged islands, interconnected fjords and channels, and mountainside glacial lakes. The area is named for the indigenous calafate bush, and we were able to partake of many things from its berries ranging from calafate sour (made with Pisco) to calafate ice cream. There is a myth that if one partakes of the calafate berry one will have to return to Calafate; we shall see if it proves true for me.

In keeping with the style of this tour company, we had dinner in someone's home – Gabo – who from this region was cooked on the stove in a pan that was made from plow blades and the metal belt used around wine barrels. I am so impressed with the creativity with recycling things for positive uses. As I don't eat red meat, our host made an amazing vegetarian dish for three of us vegans out of



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<sup>1</sup> All of Argentina has 15.0 people per km<sup>2</sup>; all of Chile has 22.3 people per km<sup>2</sup>; and Patagonia has 1.9 people per km<sup>2</sup>.

a huge eggcorn squash filled with tasty vegetables. It was one of the best dishes I have eaten, and the lamb stew eaters said the same. Gabo has generously been adopting dogs from the local shelter where he volunteers, and when we were there, he counted nine dogs as his family, especially older dogs that no one else would take.

On our second day in Calafate, we took a road trip to the 1,700 square miles of the UNESCO World Heritage Glaciers National Park, with stops along the way to see local birds and animals unique to this part of the world, like the guanacos<sup>2</sup>. The view one has of the Perito Moreno Glacier is the closest one can get to a glacier by arriving via land transport; it towers 200 feet above Lake Argentino. Glaciers are the main source of fresh water on our planet and Patagonia is the third largest resource (after Antarctica and Greenland) Although there were many tourists visiting when we were there, the park's numerous walking trails made it never feel crowded. I was able to see the glacier "calving"<sup>3</sup> quite a few times, and experience of first hearing a crackling noise, then a bombing sound like a cannon going off as the ice crashes into the water, and then the resulting waves.



On the way back to Calafate we stopped along the side of the road to pay homage to the famous Gauchito Gil at the shrines erected to him, as each one of us poured a bit of beer on the ground and made a wish for something important to us. Even though



many Argentinians may not consider themselves to be religious, the superstitious "but what if???" promotes them to create little shrines along the roads where they go to wish for good fortunes.

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<sup>2</sup> The guanaco looks like a llama and is part of the same family.

<sup>3</sup> Calving is a natural process of chunks of ice fracturing and breaking off from the glacier, a result of warming temperatures and movement of ice masses.

The next day we left extremely early to get a jumpstart at the border crossing into Chile, hoping to beat the crowds and limit our waiting time (that could range between 45 minutes to three hours). One of the things I love about traveling with OAT is that they always try to give you a feeling for the local country and culture. On our bus trip from Calafate to the Chilean border our tour guides wanted us to experience drinking the famous Argentinean mate, so they served each of us mate and gave us an explanation of its importance and prevalence in the Argentinean culture. The Chilean government is very strict about what can be brought into the country, prohibiting fresh produce, nuts, seeds, honey, and tea, among other things. Normally there are dogs there that sniff the luggage while it is still on the bus, thereby hastening the process of approving or not the luggage. However, we were unlucky, and the dogs were on vacation that day, so all our luggage had to be taken off the bus to be put through a scanner and then put back on the bus. Even so, we were able to get through the process in just an hour and so were able to arrive early enough to do a short hike in the Torres del Paine National Park in Chile, declared a World biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. This remote and unspoiled region is known for lots of rain and very high winds, but again luck was with us, and we had few clouds and no rain or wind, so we were able to see all the mountains clearly, easily spotting the different types of rock that through magma incursion formed the mountains. Sedimentary rock and magma collided violently and were thrust high into the air to form the rocks, and after the ice fields began to melt the water and wind carved the rock into huge towers of varying shapes, with crushed rock and sediment colors that form a milky gray to yellow to green to blue. The landscape is diverse in its dramatic geological formations and distinct ecosystems, from wind-bent grasses of the plains



to the sheer frozen cliffs of the Andes. We hiked around Sarmiento Lake and came across a guanaco<sup>4</sup> and her nursing baby, a rare experience. We also came across many bird species and beautiful plants just blooming for spring. We checked into one of the few hotels in the park and the next day continued our hiking, this time in the rain but again unbelievably no wind, going to the Salta Grande waterfalls fed by the waters of Lake Nordenskjold, with an impressive flow

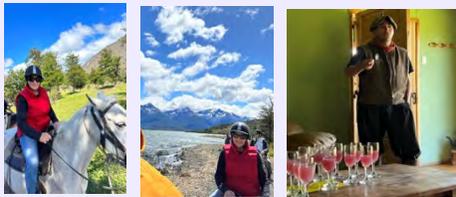
Grande waterfalls fed by the waters of Lake Nordenskjold, with an impressive flow



<sup>4</sup> The guanaco is one of 25 native mammal species in the park.

Of 100 m<sup>3</sup> per second<sup>5</sup>.

We began to have a moment of silence to enjoy the sounds and smells of the park when someone came along and told us of spotting 4 pumas along the path, so we quickly moved on to see if we could find them. We also hiked along Grey Lake to Laguna Larga to get a closer view of Grey Glacier, which is rapidly receding, exposing not only rocks but also fossils of unusual and previously unknown marine life, as well as the calving of many icebergs, of which only 1/8 of its size appears above the surface of the water; and the constant thrust of waves creates interesting sculptural forms. The next day we moved on towards Puerto Natales, but not before spotting a beautiful woodpecker on the window outside the hotel dining room.



Midday we stopped at Pingo Salvaje Ranch for a short but enjoyable horseback ride overlooking Laguna Sofia and mountains in fresh air, sunshine, and little wind. We spent the night in Puerto Natales and what most impressed me was a mural painted

on a long wall at the edge of town depicting the life of the original indigenous populations.



When we got to Punta Arenas, a bustling port overlooking

the Strait of Magellan, we had a little bit of time to walk around the town while our luggage was loaded onto the ship and our passports registered since eventually, we would be returning to Argentina. I was so pleased to finally get the chance to have a decent cup of coffee.

Once the ship Australis started moving, I immediately felt the need to put on my seasickness prevention patch and by the time I woke up the next morning I was no



longer badly affected by the movement of the ship. We were given instructions on how to get in and out of the zodiac boats<sup>6</sup>, instructions repeated every

<sup>5</sup> Equivalent to 1,000 10-minute showers or 100,000-liter bottles of water.

<sup>6</sup> The big rubber boats with motors that would take us to shore for all the landings we would make

chance the crew got to the point where one of the women in our group developed a little dance with all the steps for the zodiac maneuvers – all the women in our group performed it during one of the briefings. Overnight we sailed through the Strait of Magellan and into a labyrinth of channels, starting with Ainsworth Bay and its 120-foot high Marinelli Glacier and a forest teeming with evergreens and deciduous trees, some of which are damaged by invasive beavers<sup>7</sup>.

In the afternoon we set out in the zodiacs to Tuckers Islets, where we were able to have close-up views of the Magellanic Penguins whose migratory patterns bring them here between October and March. They are distinguishable by the wide black stripes under their chins and



stripes under their chins and inverted horseshoe shapes on their stomachs<sup>8</sup>. We were treated that night to a lecture about glaciers and I learned that historically, with many volcanic explosions at the

same time, the sun's penetration to earth was covered leading to colder temperatures and an increase in the formation of icebergs. Over the centuries, as the earth has moved closer or further from the sun, we have gotten colder winters and warmer summers. I also learned that some glaciers hang over water instead of land and when ice breaks off from them the water levels do not rise. Also, the different colors in the icebergs come from how long the ice has been compressed, with the newer snow that later becomes ice having more air bubbles and therefore lighter colors of blue and white.

The next day we sailed to the Pia Glacier that flows from the Darwin Mountains into the sea and where the cracking sound of the ice breaking off, followed by the crashing sound like a canon going off when the ice hits the water below, followed by the waves created in response, all make for an amazing and awesome experience when one is very close up when it happens. The play of light, reflection, and shadow



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<sup>7</sup> The beavers were originally introduced from Canada to sell for fur, but abandoned when the fur was found to be of inferior quality

<sup>8</sup> The Magellanic penguins are distinct from other penguins I saw on my trip to Antarctica, to be described in the June 2023 newsletter.

against the glacial ice of varying density and moisture, creates a profound palette of subtle hues. A 2003 study<sup>9</sup> found that the Patagonia glaciers of Chile and Argentina are melting so rapidly that they are making a significant contribution to the rise of sea levels, due to a rise in air temperature, a decrease in precipitation, and the unique movement of ice in this region<sup>10</sup>, making this the fastest are of glacial retreat on Earth.

The next day, while sailing through the very narrow Beagle Channel, we gathered



in the bar area of the ship, passing very close to five glaciers in Glaciers Alley, each named by explores (Romanche, Germany, France, Italy, and

Holland). As we passed each one, we were served in turn a bit of food and drink representing the corresponding ship or country. The following day, we sailed through the Murray Channel and crossed Nassau Bay to arrive at Cape Horn National Park on Horn Island, where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans meet, climbing many steps to arrive at the top where a memorial to sailors that died in the nearby seas was



created in the design of an albatross. We met the naval family that is stationed on this remote island for one year at a time to measure the atmospheric

changes on a regular basis. Sailing back up Nassau Bay, we landed at Wulaia Bay (whose name means beautiful bay) and took a steep hike through the rugged forest with a wide variety of vegetation, heard the story of the indigenous population that used to live there, learned of the “bread fruit” they used to eat (a product that the tree produces to protect it from being killed by fungus), to the beautiful views of the surrounding glaciers and sea. The ship then sailed through the night and docked at Ushuaia where we went ashore the next day, and since I wrote about Ushuaia in my article in the July newsletter, I will not do so again here other than to say that I made a visit to the prison museum – well worth the time and entrance fee to get a good understanding of what life was like when Ushuaia was first being settled by the white man as a penal colony, and as the world’s southernmost city it now houses people originating from all over Argentina. Since so many local boys died in the

<sup>9</sup> The study was led by researchers at the US Jet Propulsion Laboratory

<sup>10</sup> These glaciers are more sensitive to climate change, and they drop directly into the ocean and have different dynamics from the glaciers that end on land and melt at their front end.



Malvinas/Falklands War with the UK, there are many monuments and memorials around town dedicated to this.



The next day we flew from Ushuaia to Buenos Aires, where I spent the last days with the OAT group. We went to



the famous Recoleta cemetery, where we not only visited the grave of Eva Peron, but we learned the backstories behind the buying and selling of these grave plots and inheritance laws of the country. Later, on my own, I went back (at Mirta's suggestion) to visit the beautiful

church with its ornate wood carvings



covered in gold imported from Peru. From there we went by bus to the Parana Delta (La Tigre) where the Parana River empties into



the Rio de la Plata. Just 30 minutes from

Buenos Aires we saw a totally different world of traditional houses on stilts surrounded by lush subtropical vegetation, built on islands separated by mazes of waterways. That afternoon I was able to connect with Mirta and she treated me to the famous Italian gelato just a few short blocks from the hotel. It was so good to see her in person and catch up. My last full day in Buenos Aires I visited the Rose Gardens with its over 20,000 roses nestled in well-laid out gardens, surrounded by fountains, terraces, and sculptures; the Opera House, with its ornate European style gold carvings, statues, and acoustics so perfect that Pavarotti feared singing there in case he made a mistake; I had lunch at the famous Pizzeria Guerrin in the theater district; and visited the Isaac Fernandez Blanco Museum with its peaceful gardens and relics of religious traditions.

On my last day I had hoped to visit the National Museum of Fine Arts and the Atero Book Store, since my flight out was not until later in the afternoon. However, it was the final match of the World Cup and Argentina was playing against France, and as of 11 AM the whole city would be paralyzed. So, with great difficulty, I finally got

an Uber ride to the airport, where exceptionally long lines snaked passengers taking flights throughout the day excitedly together to check in, watching the match on cell phones and the few TVs scattered around the terminal. With each Argentinian goal there were enormous shouts and screams. What an amazing experience to be in Argentina when victory was earned and the World Cup was in the country's hands for the third time; what joy, what celebrations, what comradery. It is a unique experience I will remember forever more.



# Wearable Technologies in Health Care

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By Sumedha Mona Khanna



A noticeable global demographic trend of our times is a rapid increase in the population aged 60 and over. People are living longer and remaining healthier and active in their later years. The extended life span also comes with a higher likelihood of chronic diseases and disability, creating changes in the lives of older persons and their families. Current trends show that most older people want to live independently in their own homes – or what is called “ageing in place”.

Unfortunately, health and mobility challenges in older age create situations that might require them to live either with a family member or in an Assisted Care Community.

Fortunately, rapidly advancing technology can help them to stay independent as well as connected to health care providers. This is where *Wearable Technologies* come in. They are the future of our health and wellness care. They empower us with the ability to monitor our health and wellness before we develop illness and to stay proactively connected with our health care system. They motivate us to maintain our health, in turn helping to reduce hospital visits and admissions.

## What Are Some of the Common Medical Challenges of Ageing?

1. Heart-related conditions - e.g., high blood pressure; heart arrhythmia; poor circulation; myocardial infarction leading to heart attack; reduced oxygen levels, etc.
2. Diabetes
3. Arthritis and mobility challenges due to degenerative issues of the spine, hips or knees; falls leading to fractures or other serious injuries requiring prolonged hospitalization.

## What are Wearable Technologies?

In the healthcare and wellness industry, there have been important breakthroughs in mobile technology which have led to an increase in the development and use of portable devices. Wearable devices are evolving as outstanding health monitoring devices for medical care services, especially with increasing attention towards wellbeing, fitness, and disease prevention.

Wearable devices in healthcare include electronic devices that people can wear, such as smartwatches and Fitbits. These are designed to collect their users’ personal health data. They can send a user’s health information to a health care professional/provider in real time, leading to early intervention that can prevent hospitalization or serious illness.

## Examples of Popular Wearable Devices in Health Care

1. *Wearable Fitness Trackers*

These are wristbands equipped with sensors to keep track of the user's physical activity and heart rate. They also provide health and fitness recommendations by syncing to various smartphone applications.

## 2. *Smart Health Watches*

These have advanced very fast in the past five years as a clinically viable healthcare tool. For example, Apple launched its early version in 2017 for monitoring heart rates and heart arrhythmia. The latest Smartwatch Apple Series 8 released in 2022 features advanced health sensors and apps, so one can take an Electrocardiogram (ECG)<sup>1</sup>, measure heart rate and blood oxygen, track temperature changes, detect a crash or fall, track sleep stages, and provide advanced workout metrics. It helps one to stay active, healthy, safe, and connected. Smartwatches allow users to perform tasks they normally do on their phones, such as reading notifications, sending simple messages, making phone calls - while also offering some of the exercise and health-tracking benefits of fitness trackers.

## 3. *Wearable ECG Monitors*

Wearable ECG monitors can measure electrocardiograms.

The Move ECG Monitor can measure an electrocardiogram and send the reading to user's doctor, as well as detect atrial fibrillations<sup>2</sup>. It is also able to track exercise pace, distance, elevation, as well as automatic tracking for walking, running, swimming, and biking.

## 4. *Wearable Blood Pressure Monitors*

Omron Healthcare launched Heart Guide in 2019, the first wearable blood pressure monitor. It looks like a typical Smartwatch, but it is also an oscillometer blood pressure monitor that can measure blood pressure and daily activity-like steps taken, distance travelled, and calories burned. Heart Guide can hold up to 100 readings in its memory and all readings can be transferred to a corresponding mobile app *HeartAdvisor*, for review, comparison, and treatment optimization, so the user can store, track, and share the data with the physician while also learning how the personal habits affect blood pressure.

## 5. *Glucose Monitoring Devices*

Freestyle Libre is Continuous Glucose Monitoring System that can check glucose levels, provide one's doctor with data to adjust treatment and make better decisions and help manage glucose levels before they spike too high or drop too low.

Dexcom G6 Continuous Glucose Monitoring System also helps to make better diabetes treatment and diabetes management decisions with no fingerstick and no calibrations. It helps one to set an optimal range and get notified when the glucose levels get too high or too low and shares the information with the healthcare providers.

## 6. *Biosensors*

These are up and coming wearable medical devices that are very different from wrist trackers or Smartwatches. These devices are portable sensors that come in the form of gloves, clothing, bandages, and implants. They create two-way feedback between the users

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<sup>1</sup> a recording of the heart's electrical activity

<sup>2</sup> an irregular, often rapid heart rate that commonly causes poor blood flow

and their medical care providers and enable continuous and noninvasive disease diagnosis and health monitoring from physical motion to biofluids.

There are also self-adhesive patches: the Phillips' Wearable Biosensor is a self-adhesive patch that allows patients to move around while collecting data on their movement, heart rate, respiratory rate, skin temperature, body posture, fall detection, step count. Among others.

### **Some Challenges/Barriers to Effective Use of Wearable Technology**

- Inadequate health literacy skills
- Declining comprehension with age
- Inadequate understanding and perception of health-related motivation and behavior to improve the outcomes
- Limited ability to adequately use the Internet and to access health portals
- Unavailability of reliable Internet connections
- Concerns about privacy

### **The Future Landscape for Using Wearable Technology in Healthcare**

Remote care using telehealth and wearable devices became a critical part of health operations, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic and it is expected to continue being an important tool for patients and healthcare providers. The growth of wearables along with shortages of skilled caregivers has led to an emergent need for automatic, real-time personalized designs for in-place healthcare. Such designs require expertise in management of chronic illnesses, surgical outcomes, post-discharge care, and emotional wellbeing. The goal is to shift to more personalized care that empowers patients to be engaged in self-care and help caregivers to better support their loved ones. These technologies need to be simplified for ease of use by older adults for them to monitor their health, connect with their healthcare providers, and intervene early to manage their health, in turn requiring fewer visits to healthcare services. Ensuring the availability of reliable internet services and accessibility to health portals will be critical. Most importantly, use of wearable technologies will allow more older adults to age-in-place.



## Where Are They Now?

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*By César Hermida Bustos*



Returning to Ecuador after retiring from PAHO/WHO, I was appointed Vice Minister of Health. It was certainly a privilege to return, with the Minister or not, to be there and be able this time to represent the country in the meetings of the WHO governing bodies both in Washington and Geneva. Shortly after finishing that responsibility, I was hired as an UNFPA adviser, allowing me to participate, as an adviser on behalf of the United Nations Agencies in the working groups of the National Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution of Rights for the year 2008. Near the end of that contract, I received a brief training at the United Nations International Center for Older Persons, in Malta. As a result of this training, I committed to founding the first "University for the Elderly" program in Ecuador.

This proposal was welcomed by the University of Cuenca as a continuing education program, sponsored by Cuenca's Municipal Health Council. It was inaugurated in 2012 with participation from the University of Cuenca's dean and the city mayor. Then I returned to the Ministry of Health to direct its Science and Technology Initiative. Later I accepted the invitation of the Central University of Ecuador's dean to work in the Directorate of Links with Society, through which we replicated Cuenca's University for the Elderly Program that had successfully continued in Cuenca.

In 2018, I decided to return permanently to my native Cuenca, where I resumed teaching at the University for the Elderly, as Academic Director. It now has 153 students with two Modules: Quality of Life and Gerontological Cultural Tourism. There are also workshops held in biodance, ludo therapy, English, a polyphonic choir, and a chess club, a book club, a cinema forum, solar cooking classes, crafts workshops. They take place on the Campus of the University of Cuenca, in a city that has the prestige not only of being a World Heritage City and University City, but also of welcoming a remarkable number of national and international retirees.

In 2019, we organized with the University of Cuenca the First National Congress of Healthy Older Adults, and in 2021, with the Central University of Quito, we held the Second Congress. Now we are organizing, for September, the Third Congress with the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil.

The experience has been fascinating. Through it we put into practice the principles of sharing between teachers and students, establishing groups of friendship and solidarity to learn about and promote individual and collective health. It is about achieving an optimal quality of life, understood by us as health the way it is defined by WHO, to satisfactorily enjoy meeting bodily, subjective, and social needs. We also provide cultural tourism for the elderly, offering opportunities for them to learn about the nature and geographical and historical characteristics of various urban sites and rural landscapes or about national places such as the Galapagos.

Within this framework, in addition to my teaching activity, I participate in monthly group meetings that include a literary group called "La Casa Tomada", another group called the Historians of the Faculty of Medicine, the Read Book Club, and a Cinema Forum. I am an inveterate reader and a vocational writer. In recent years I published two academic books, "Sumak Kawsay (Good Living) and Health", and "Health and Quality of Life", as well as two novels, one historical and the other fictional that won a National Narrative Award. With my wife, daughters, and grandchildren we usually spend the weekends at a nearby farm in a subtropical valley. I occasionally play the accordion there. I live in Cuenca, next to the Tomebamba River, along whose riverside paths I walk for 40 minutes every morning.

Through all of these activities I find myself doing physical exercise, studying, learning, and teaching about the wonderful Greater Life Cycle, without any care for ageing, in whatever way it may be healthy.



#### **WHO DG'S SUPPORT OF AFSMs**

On 29 March 2023, the Global Council of AFSM held its regular meeting to which the DG Dr. Tedros was invited. To everybody's surprise and delight the DG not only attended but he gave an indication of support from WHO to the associations and of the importance of the AFSMs being considered important members of the WHO "family". We should expect in the future more interaction with and support from WHO HQ for administrative and logistics matters, as well as for some programmatic affairs. He also made a pledge to support replication of these arrangements at the Regional (PAHO in our case) and country levels. This is the first time such support has been shown at that level, and we will be working closely with our sister AFSMs to follow up. We will keep you informed of any developments in the future.

## Obituary for Leone Visse

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*By her children - Aprille Adoremos, Arlene A Steinwald and Anthony Adoremos*



Leone Visse worked for the National Older Worker Career Center (NOWCC) soon after retiring from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hired contractors from the NOWCC program for various jobs. Her job was working up front, lending confidential records to users for pesticide registrations. EPA staff checked these records in and out like library books to attain history on chemicals being utilized by different companies for product registration. Apparently, there were over 100 transactions each day.

Leone worked at the EPA for 28 years, until 2018. She managed to outstay various supervisors. She became the “department expert”. Because she was hired as a contractor, she could not be a supervisor. However, it was made known they wanted her to be. She respectfully declined any such notion as she “already supervised people” at PAHO. Her supervisors and peers enjoyed working with her as she “always worked hard” and was “always willing to help anyone”. One supervisor stated, “I was grateful to come to work every day, knowing that Ms. Visse was my right hand (person)”.

Leone could complete most tasks on her computer, even electronic submissions which was a new process. One co-worker said she was “so good on the computer. She would always say she wasn’t an expert, but she taught us everything”.



She continued to take vacations to France to visit her family. Her sister, Annelisse and husband lived near the Palace of Versailles and 45 minutes outside of Paris. Leone loved visiting and enjoying a meal at trendy restaurants in Paris with her niece, Blandine, and family. She was delighted with the variety of red wines available, particularly from the Bordeaux region. Her last visit to France was when she was 89 years old.

She had the opportunity to travel to the Philippines when she was 84 years old. She went to celebrate a fellow octogenarian’s birthday. Also enjoyed visiting a few

friends and reminiscing. While there, she indulged in mangoes and papayas – sweet and delicious! With handkerchief in hand, she didn't mind the tropical heat since she could cool off with a mango juice or a San Miguel beer.

After retiring from the EPA, she began to spend more time in New Jersey with her two nieces and their families and in Bethany Beach, Delaware when possible. In New Jersey, she was surrounded by activity. She would monitor her grandnieces and grandnephews doing homework or reading a book as she would be reading the New York Times newspaper. On certain days, there was family working from home who would keep her company. Leone learned to stream her shows through Apple TV and watch her favorites. In between, she found playing Free Cell very entertaining. It was hard to put down at times!



Leone very much enjoyed being surrounded by family. She especially loved family dinners. In fact, she was still teaching the kids table manners. She continued to have a great sense of humor and a positive attitude. Stan Lee, the family dog, would sit in her chair with her each day. It was the highlight of her day. They became very close.



<i>In Memoriam</i>	
<b>DEATHS INFORMED IN 2023 AND NOT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED</b>	
<b>Francisco J. López Antuñano</b>	<b>January 16, 2023</b>
<b>Leone Visse</b>	<b>February 8, 2023</b>



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