



Newsletter

Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members

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Message from the President



Changes

So many of us do not like change. Things may be comfortable, or perhaps not so comfortable, but it is often easier to keep things the way they are. And then there are times when we have no choice.

For several years we have had the good fortune to work with a very supportive PAHO Director. Dr. Roses has listened to our problems, to our needs, and to our suggestions. Her door has been open, and we have been lucky to have her ear and her understanding. Very soon Dr. Roses will be leaving her post when her term of office expires. No one knows who the next PAHO Director might be, but we can only hope to attain the same level of support from the 10th floor at PAHO as we have had until now.

When PAHO/WHO AFSM was founded, few members owned personal computers. And now, most members either own one or have access to one through friends or family. The cost of snail mail is escalating, and we must bring ourselves more into the electronic age. We anticipate using email within the next year to send you our newsletters and announcements. Not only will this lower our operating costs but it will also permit us to be more responsive to your needs. To make this plan a reality we shall need everyone's cooperation. WE NEED YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS.

And, if you change either your home or email addresses, you must remember to inform us so that you continue to receive our mailings. Please see the announcement below for information about whom to contact regarding address changes.

Former WHO and PAHO staff were recently surprised when Geneva HQ made sweeping changes in the Staff Health Insurance Governance. AFSM PAHO worked closely with AFSM Geneva to be kept aware of these proposals and to argue together for modifications when deemed appropriate. The PAHO representative from the Staff Association traveled to Geneva to voice our concerns and to propose alternative approaches. During this period we also dealt with contacts in SEARO and EMRO. We foresee the need to establish closer ties with our colleagues in other Regions in order to maintain our long-established rights and benefits.

As you will read in this current issue of the *Newsletter*, we shall soon come together in Panama for another international reunion. There will be much to discuss and, yes, there will be much to see and do. Incidentally, Panama has recently been designated by a top travel magazine as one of the 10 most popular new traveler destinations in the world, so we hope that this is an added incentive for you to come to the reunion.

As we enter into this new period of change we do hope that you will join us in Panama to share our thoughts, our concerns, and our friendship.

Nancy Berinstein
President

Both AFSM and the Staff Health Insurance Office Need Your Assistance!

As our President has mentioned in her column above, in the near future AFSM will be moving over to exclusive electronic communication. We want to ensure that you continue to receive information from AFSM in a timely manner and that you might continue to participate in all the benefits of former staff members. Accordingly, please make certain that we have an updated email address for you. Please send it electronically to Hortensia Saginor

at either of the following addresses: isaginor@aol.com or hortensiasagi@gmail.com.

In addition, the Staff Health Insurance office (SHI) asks that you kindly complete and return the green address form that we have enclosed in this envelope so they can keep you advised of any future changes in health insurance benefits. You may return the form directly to the insurance office. Their mailing address and email address can be found at the bottom of the green form.

Many thanks for your help!

Fifth AFSM International Reunion



The big news is that we have decided to hold our next International Reunion from 15-18 October 2012 in Panama City, Panama. We will offer informative presentations, good discussions, sightseeing, lots of laughter, music, rum, and a chance to see old friends and colleagues.

And why Panama? *The New York Times* has designated Panama as the number one choice for tourist travel in the year 2012. It says, "Go for the canal. Stay for everything else." It is conveniently located with good plane service. It is not expensive. English and Spanish are used in most places. And there is much to see and do.

It has been 12 years since Panama gained control of its canal, and the country's economy is booming. Cranes stalk the skyline of the capital, Panama City, where high-rises sprout one after the next and immigrants arrive daily from around the world. The Panama Canal itself is in the early stages of a multibillion dollar expansion. Those who want to see the waterway as it was originally designed



should see it now. The expansion is expected to be completed by 2014, the canal's 100-year anniversary.

In addition, there are boat rides, nature parks, bird watching, shopping, and museums. Panama

City's famously dilapidated historic quarter, Casco Viejo, has been transformed. The neighborhood, a tangle of narrow streets, centuries-old houses, and neocolonial government buildings was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997 and is now a trendy arts district with galleries, coffeehouses, street musicians,

and some of the city's most stylish restaurants and boutique hotels.

For those of you who have joined us for past reunions in Washington, Buenos Aires, Cartagena, and Lima, you know what an enjoyable experience you will be having in Panama. For the rest of you, come along and enjoy the adventure.

We will soon send you additional information regarding hotel accommodations and the reunion agenda. For now, stay tuned and SAVE THE DATE!

Amendments to the WHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI) Rules

You may recall that in January we sent you information electronically informing you about changes in the health insurance rules. As we advised you then, the recommendations of the Eighth Joint Meeting of the Staff Health Insurance were recently approved by the Director General, and the new amendments to the SHI rules went into effect on 1 January 2012. If you have not received an envelope in the mail from SHI with the corresponding information, please contact Giovanna Martinez at martineg@paho.org or Chris Saenz at saenzchr@paho.org, with a copy to Carol Collado at collado@verizon.net. ■

Continuation of Pension Payments after Death of Pensioner

It is important, if you are the surviving spouse of a UN pensioner, that you contact the UN Pension Fund in order to ensure that you continue to receive your share of the pension payments. This and other important information is included in the AFSM Survivor's Manual. If you do not have a copy of this document, please contact Hortensia Saginor at isaginor@aol.com or hortensiasagi@gmail.com. ■

Twenty-Second General Meeting of AFSM

The World Bank's Bretton Woods Recreation Center in the Maryland countryside was the bucolic setting for AFSM's General Meeting on 8 December 2011; our usual venue at PAHO HQ was unavailable due to limited parking from ongoing construction. The fresh air invigorated the 50-plus attendees who engaged in animated conversations until the President, Nancy Berinstein, called the meeting to order. She welcomed the participants, including representatives from sister organizations and PAHO. Marilyn Rice was designated as Chairperson, and, though jet-lagged from her overnight flight from Paris, she ably presided over a wide-ranging agenda. In addition to the traditional updates on pension and health care, the program included an introduction to the new communications tools being developed by the Association, announcement of the future site for the next International Reunion (in Panama), reports on workshops with sister organizations, and a presentation by a representative from the Colombia Chapter, Gustavo Mora. First, however, Marilyn requested a minute of silence in memory of colleagues who had passed away during the year.

In her **Report of the President**, Nancy highlighted the intensive efforts to counter the changes being proposed in Geneva on the Governance of the Staff Health Insurance, changes that would adversely impact the Regions. On behalf of the Association she honored Jaime Ayalde and Jean Surgi for their many contributions over the years and their continued service as honorary members of the Board.

Approval of Modified Bylaws: The proposed revision was unanimously approved. Major changes included replacing "Purpose" with "Vision and Mission of the Association"; adding "focal points" to facilitate communications and collaboration with countries without chapters; and clarifying the purpose of the Emergency Fund. [The updated Bylaws have been posted on the AFSM website.]

Colombia Chapter: Gustavo Mora summarized the extensive activities carried out by the chapter since its founding in 2008, including the organization of the Third International Reunion in Cartagena. He listed key elements for the success of the Chapter: regular

meetings, participation of spouses, the designation of focal points, and a balance between information and entertainment. [His speech is included further on in this newsletter.]

International Reunion: After considering various venues for the October 2012 Reunion, the board has selected Panama, where retired staff and the PWR have expressed interest and offered support for its organization. Ease of travel, facilities and tourist attractions were also factors in the selection.

Election of Board Members: In accordance with the Bylaws, elections were held for four vacancies. The meeting unanimously re-elected the three current members who agreed to serve another three-year term: Nancy Berinstein, Carol Collado and Hortensia Saginor. Germán Perdomo was elected to complete the term left vacant when Gabriel Schmunis resigned in September 2011.

ASFM Communication Tools: Germán Perdomo explained the virtual tools soon to be available to AFSM members. Through SharePoint they will be able to access the Association's webpage as well as contact other members using the Association's *Facebook* site.

International Organizations Workshops: Jean-Yves Maillat of the World Bank reported on the annual event which brought together representatives from six sister associations of former staff members to share key issues. The two topics selected, *Health Insurance* and *The Future of Retiree Associations*, addressed common challenges, such as increasing costs of health insurance coverage and policies aimed at elimination of the career track.

WHO Staff Health Insurance Reform: Pilar Vidal, President of the PAHO Staff Association, reported on the recommendations to the Director General from the Staff Health Insurance Joint Meeting held in Geneva last October. Present trends would produce a \$20 billion deficit by 2040 with long-term care increasingly contributing to this forecast. Therefore, a 10% increase for 2012 contributions was recommended with 4% annual increases thereafter. All Regional representatives opposed the proposed dismantling of the Regional

Surveillance Committees as well as a requirement of 15 years of service (rather than 10) to qualify for coverage. In closing, Ms. Vidal stressed the need for continued collaboration with the Administration, AFSM Geneva, and the Regions to make our voices heard.

PAHO Health Insurance and WHO Pension: Giovanna Martinez noted that no significant changes in coverage have occurred during the year, although complaints related to lenses and dental care continue. The pension fund, while suffering from recent losses, remains well capitalized.

Credit Union: Miguel Boluda, CEO, reported that the CU is strong; its capitalization of 18% is well above recommended levels. Deposits continue to grow, but, reflecting the economy, loans are down and delinquen-

cies have increased. He stressed the need to maintain active accounts, since those inactive for three years are considered abandoned per DC law. Mr. Boluda urged members to update their personal information on record with the CU to avoid future problems (taxes, beneficiaries, etc.). Door prizes offered by the CU were drawn to the delight of the winners.

Luncheon: The meeting was adjourned, and the President invited all to enjoy a buffet lunch in the sunlit dining room of the Recreation Center. Members table-hopped to greet old colleagues, inquire about their health, compliment them on their appearances, and wish them the best for the coming year. Finally, somewhat reluctantly, we put on our coats and headed to our parked cars, taking with us memories of another warm encounter in December.

Presentation of Awards



Jean Surgi and Jaime Ayalde

It was with great pleasure that AFSM, at its General Meeting, recognized Jaime Ayalde and Jean Surgi for their significant contributions and many years of service to AFSM. It would be questionable as to whether we would have an association today if it were not for Jaime and Jean. Both were there at its inception and have continued to infuse AFSM with their intelligence and farsightedness. Few associations have been so fortunate as to have two such compassionate, insightful, and hardworking individuals give of their time for so many years. They were presented with

crystal clocks inscribed: “Jaime Ayalde. President, leader, visionary, friend. AFSM 2011” and “Jean Surgi, our picky editor, institutional memory, Secretary, friend, AFSM 2011.”

Jaime Ayalde

On 15 June 1990 Jaime was one of the 50 former PAHO/WHO staff members who attended the first AFSM General Meeting to elect a Coordinating Committee (CC) and subcommittees to propose a program and bylaws for the Association, which was officially born on 8 November 1990. Jaime and Jean Surgi were members of the CC and Hans Bruch was elected as the first President of the Association.

Jaime officially became a member of the Board of Directors (BOD) in January 1993 and, at its meeting of 30 January 1996, the Board of Directors elected him President of AFSM, a position that he held for 10 years. At the close of his Presidency he was unanimously elected to be Member Emeritus of the Board.

Born in Colombia, Jaime obtained a Doctor’s degree in Medicine and Surgery (Xaveriana University, Bogotá, 1951), and specialized in Prevention and Control of Malaria and other Vector-Borne Diseases in Maracay, Venezuela. In 1956 he was granted a Master of Public Health degree by The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, in Baltimore, Maryland.

In Colombia the Minister of Health assigned Jaime to the malaria control component of SCISP, a USA and Colombia cooperative program, with consecutive duty stations in Magangué, Pereira and Barranquilla. This program was converted into a National Malaria Eradication Service, of which Jaime was the Deputy Director, with duty station Bogotá.

In 1960 Jaime joined the ranks of PAHO for a projected two years that were converted into 26 years of service, including a distinguished service appointment of Career Officer of WHO granted by Dr. Mahler, then Director General.

His first PAHO assignment was Suriname, which at the time was an integral part of the Netherlands Kingdom. Jaime was appointed PAHO Country Representative, the first in the country, as this was the new administrative modality in all the countries of the Americas. In addition, Jaime was the Head of the Suriname National Malaria Eradication Program for a period of five years. New appointments included leader of PAHO's malaria team in Peru and Brazil.

In 1960 Jaime was transferred to Washington as an epidemiologist in the Malaria and Other Parasitic Diseases unit, and he was its chief for a short period. At the time he doubled his duties as Assistant Chief of the Area of Disease Prevention and Control. He retired from PAHO in 1986.

Fortunately for us, he then brought his intelligence, diplomacy, and organizational skills to AFSM and helped mold us into the thriving association that it is today.

Jean Surgi

When a group of retirees began to form AFSM in 1988-1989, Jean Surgi was invited to join the committee to consider related budget issues. She came in eighth in the election for the first, seven-member Board of Directors, which took office in January 1990. When a Board member resigned a little more than a year afterwards, she was elected to fill that place and has been active ever since, serving for many years as Secretary, working on various revisions of the Bylaws, and assisting with the production of the *Newsletter*. When she resigned from the Board after more than 10 years, she was given the title of Honorary Member. She

attends most BOD meetings and still serves as an editor/proofreader of the *Newsletter* in English.

Jean was born and raised in Charlottesville, VA during the Great Depression, the second daughter of a hardware traveling salesman and a stay-at-home (former teacher) mom. She graduated from Duke University in 1947 with an A.B. degree in sociology and psychology. A month later she was married and planned to be a stay-at-home mom herself. But she went to work as a secretary to boost the family income, and when the marriage failed a few years later she found herself the main support of two daughters. By that time she had moved to Silver Spring MD, and she has lived in Montgomery County ever since. Her second marriage lasted almost 35 years, until the death of her husband Bill in 2003.

She held a series of secretarial and administrative jobs and sometimes worked on weekends as a restaurant cashier to maintain a home for her family. At one point, in desperation, she accepted an entry-level secretarial post at the local Board of Education - fortuitously, it turned out, in the newly formed Budget Office. She had an undiscovered talent for budget work, and in about five months she was promoted to technical assistant, several pay grades higher.

After working there for a few years, Jean applied for a Budget Officer post at PAHO and was hired to start work in August 1965. Jean's responsibilities with PAHO over the next 30 years mirror the major changes and ways that PAHO did business. She moved on from typewriters to automatic typewriters and then to computers. She moved from Budget Officer to Supervisor of the newly created Secretarial Center, back to Budget, and later to Supervisor of the Conference Documents Section. For many, her description of life at PAHO and changes in technology bring back vivid memories of how things used to be.

Jean retired in 1986 but worked as a contract employee from time to time until 1995. Fortunately for AFSM, she then transferred her formidable intelligence and energy to the Board and became a key component in its growth and direction.

In order from left to right



Friends at General Meeting, December 2011



*Germán Perdomo and
Hernán Rosenberg*



*María Esther Fernandez, Cecilia Jibaja,
Patricia Vidal Ilijic and Angie Freeman*



*Amanda Ellauri, Lourdes Saenz and
Norma Gandolfo*



Clara Ines Rubiano and Elias Anzola



Marilyn Rice, Flora Early and Nancy Berinstein



Antonio Hernández, Giovanna Martinez and Pilar Vidal



Fredy Burgos and Miguel Boluda



María Teresa Hernandez and Meche Lorenzana



Gustavo Mora, Hortensia Saginor and Teresita Josey



Elsa Gómez and Ligia Antolinez-Ryon

Remarks by Gustavo Mora, Colombia Chapter

I am very pleased to participate in the annual meeting of the Association on behalf of the Chapter and to have the opportunity to strengthen ties of friendship with all of you. The creation of the Chapter was the result of ideas presented by the Board during the second international meeting held in Buenos Aires in April 2006, in which Germán Mora, Helena Restrepo and I had the opportunity to participate. The initiative was promoted through a first meeting in Cali, in October 2006. There have been five annual meetings in different regions of the country, which have strengthened the national

dimension of the initiative. A directing committee was created, facilitators by regions were appointed, and quotas for members were established. The increasing relationship with the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) in Colombia should be noted.

In September 2008, during the third international meeting in Cartagena, Helena Restrepo presented the document, “Why and for What Reason a Chapter?” It has become a source of motivation for our activities; it underlines the importance of social capital and of values such as solidarity, participation and friendship.

One of the implications of this approach has been the active involvement of spouses and in some cases of their children.

During the sixth meeting held in Ibagué this year, a highlight was the presentation by the president of AFICS on the two-track adjustment within the United Nations Pension System, a subject that was considered at the fourth international AFSM reunion in Lima in 2010. Today most of the former staff members in Colombia are in the process of moving to the double-track system; some have already received a significant increase in the pension as a result of this decision, which depends on the revaluation of the Colombian peso and the stability of the local economy. These steps were taken after a year of discussion of this sensitive issue, a joint effort of the Board of AFSM, AFICS and the Chapter.

Another topic discussed in Ibagué was the expansion of “The Social Project,” which has been developed in Bogotá through voluntary support groups with participation of spouses. A commission was appointed to draft a proposal and some projects to help elderly populations that have been provisionally identified in Cali and Medellín. What matters most is the opportunity for cohesion and cooperation for the former staff members. However, additional financial resources will be required.

It was also agreed to publish a book containing the experiences of some members and to highlight their different interests and professional profiles. I have brought a book by Luis Arcila entitled “An Equestrian Feeling,” which, in addition to being well-written, shows love and passion for a fascinating subject. He is also preparing an interesting essay on old age.

While taking advantage of the document already developed by Jaime Ayalde, “Staff Benefits – Health Insurance, Pension and Other Benefits of a Surviving Spouse,” we decided to prepare a new document for former members by adding country-specific information, such as the one on the double-track system.

As you can see, our Chapter is in good health and well developed, particularly regarding the solidarity and social activity of its members, aspects highlighted by Helena Restrepo. This would not have been possible

without the enthusiastic support, both in leadership and logistics, of the AFSM Board. We also appreciate the timely support provided by the Federal Credit Union.

Relations have improved with the national office of the PAHO Representation. This was evident during the Director’s recent visit to the country, as well as by our participation in social activities and by the openness of the Documentation Center to include our information. PAHO has just published an interview to Dr. Luis Carlos Ochoa, to whom a tribute had already been paid during the annual meeting in 2010.

The AFSM *Newsletter* is already a key reference point and communication vehicle; it has improved its presentation and the design is more attractive. We expect the newly revised Website to also play a more visible role.

Digital technologies offer new opportunities for multiplying efforts; video-conferences could be a fruitful space for direct participation in the annual meetings by the local level.

In summary, we emphasize the following four points. Firstly, since the creation of the Chapter, meetings have been held regularly, and the core of its development has been stabilized. Secondly, focal points have been created in Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Cartagena and Bucaramanga, which are proving to be a vitalizing factor, one that could be replicated in other countries depending upon their particular circumstances. Thirdly, participation of spouses has been active and enthusiastic. Lastly, we have achieved a good balance between sharing official and cultural information and conducting entertainment activities.

In conclusion, we consider that taking the initiative to develop membership at the local level, through the chapters and focal points, to be one of the major achievements of the Association in recent years. ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Miguel Márquez, AFICS/AEFNUC-Cuba

Miguel Marquez spent many years working at PAHO in Washington and was then appointed PWR in Nicaragua and finally in Cuba. At the completion of a distinguished career he and his wife Libia decided to make Cuba their permanent home. Over the years he has continued his work in international cooperation and has played an instrumental role in founding AFICS (AEFNUC in Spanish), the Association of Former International Civil Servants of Cuba.



Miguel Márquez, with members of The Executive Committee of AEFNUC, and Dr. Barbara Persce Monteiro, UN Representative in Cuba"

By the Executive Committee of AEFNUC, Cuba

Who Are We?

Our Association is young. It was established only five years ago. It is the product of a series of staggered meetings held to reach a consensus on a common flag and founding United Nations principles.

In 2004, we brought together professionals, technical experts, secretaries, and general services workers to form a united body. It is composed of brothers and sisters from UNDP (16); UNESCO (9); UNICEF (6); PAHO/WHO (3); UNFPA, IAEA and UNO (2); FAO. UFECC and ECLAC (1); for a total of 43 members and 10 honorary members: [PAHO/WHO (7) UNIDO/ACNUP/UNDP (3)].

Our headquarters is in the UNDP office in Cuba, because of its role as Coordinator of the United Nations System. The different activities are carried out in rotation in the headquarters of each of the accredited organizations in Cuba. We have access to basic equipment for our work and communication.

Our Mission and Objectives

- Promote the principles and programs of the United Nations System (UNS)
- Feel and live life as a part of the UNS, sharing its ideals and working together to ensure the achievement of our rights: pension, health insurance, right to be contracted for tasks as members of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), and for the experiences and skills that the national programs can provide
- Have ongoing information about the life and health conditions of the members, in order to offer fraternal collaboration and solidarity
- Be up-to-date on global information and new provisions through academic events: panels, forums, conferences, as well as participation in transforming activities of the UNS
- Promote social and personal relations and well-being among the members, and support those that do not have family support

Our International Relations

The AEFNUC provided collegial support to the meetings of the FAFICS Council in New York (2007), Rome (2008), London (2010) and Geneva (2011).

We have our own box in the Web page of the UNDP Representative in Cuba. We publish contributions in the FAFICS New York newsletter, and we publish our own quarterly newsletters and annual reports at the end of the year.

It has been very useful for our Association to receive suggestions and to interchange experiences with the FAFICS headquarters office in New York and the suboffices in Latin America.

What Have We Achieved?

- Maintain solidarity among the members
- Be present and participate in different programs in collaboration with the UNS in Cuba

- Join the national drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- Address in panel-forums issues that concern those in our age group such as:
 - Program on the care of the elderly in Cuba: ageing and quality of life
 - Healthy food for a better quality of life
 - Climate change and its repercussions on the quality of life of the elderly
 - International solidarity and defending the United Nations principles

Where Are We Going?

- Maintain the fundamental spirit and vision of the AEFNUC, with preparation of a new work plan for 2012, promoting the practice of “all for all”
- Strengthen the visibility of AEFNUC in different UN organizations that collaborate in Cuba
- Improve timely communication and solidarity among the members
- Continue with the program of updating knowledge and opportunities related to the elderly
- Convene meetings with people in the UNS to promote their future participation in AEFNUC
- Create material conditions to further the exchange of knowledge and experiences with the associations of former staff of other UN specialized agencies
- Active follow-up on UN matters related to pension and health insurance through quarterly newsletters and special communications when problems arise related to benefits from accumulated experiences in the years of international work, such as decreases in pension, limitations of health insurance and re-employment for short periods of time
- Participate in periodic meetings of FAFICS
- Join the Cuban Association of the United Nations in the promotion of world peace and not war

Who Sits on the Executive Committee of AEFNUC?

President: Ana María Gudz (UNDP)

Vice President: Miguel Márquez (PAHO/WHO)

Secretary: Libia Victoria Cerezo (PAHO/WHO)

Recording Secretary: Lourdes Cárdenas (UNDP)

Treasurer: Martha Herrera (WHO)

Vice Treasurer: Acne Pérez (UNESCO)

World Health Day 2012: Ageing and Health

The topic of World Health Day in 2012 was *Ageing and Health*, with the theme “**Good Health Adds Life to Years.**” It focused on how good health throughout life can help older men and women lead full and productive lives and be a resource for their families and communities. Ageing concerns each and every one of us – whether young or old, male or female, rich or poor – no matter where we live. The official slogan for World Health Day 2012 was “Good health adds life to years.” Ageing is inevitable, but everyone ages differently. Even if we are young at heart, we need to maintain our physical, mental, and social well-being to stay healthy and independent well into old age. Beyond our wish to add years to life, we need to add life to years.

In the 21st century, health is determined by and contributes to broad social trends. Economies are globalizing, more and more people live and work in cities, family patterns are changing and technology is evolving rapidly. One of the biggest social transformations is population ageing. Soon, the world will have more older people than children and more people of very old age than ever before.

The number of people today aged 60 and over has doubled since 1980. The number of people aged 80 years will almost quadruple to 395 million between now and 2050. Within the next five years, the number of adults aged 65 and over will outnumber children under the age of 5. By 2050, these older adults will outnumber all children under the age of 14. The majority of older people live in low- or middle-income countries. By 2050, this number will have increased to 80%.

Determinants of Healthy Ageing

1. Healthy ageing is linked to health in earlier stages of life. Under-nutrition in the womb, for example, may increase the risk of disease in adult life, such as circulatory diseases and diabetes. Respiratory infections in childhood may increase the risk of chronic bronchitis in adult life. Obese or overweight adolescents run the risk of developing chronic diseases, such as diabetes, circulatory disease, cancer, respiratory and musculoskeletal disorders, in adult life.
2. Yet how well we age depends on many factors. The functional capacity of an individual’s biological system increases during the first years of life, reaches

its peak in early adulthood, and naturally declines thereafter. The rate of decline is determined, at least in part, by our behaviors and exposures across the whole life course. These include what we eat, how physically active we are and our exposure to health risks such as those caused by smoking, harmful consumption of alcohol, or exposure to toxic substances.

General Approach

WHO promotes a healthy lifestyle across the life-course to save lives, protect health, and alleviate disability and pain in older age. Age-friendly environments and early detection of disease, as well as prevention and care, improve the well-being of older people. Population ageing will hamper the achievement of socioeconomic and human development goals if action is not taken today. With this year's World Health Day campaign, WHO wants to go beyond awareness-raising to elicit concrete action and positive change. The World Health Day campaign aimed to engage all of society – from policy-makers and politicians to older people and youth – to take action to create societies which appreciate and acknowledge older people as valued resources and enable them to participate fully; and to help protect and improve health as we age.

The day was used to highlight how this change can be brought about, giving examples of how older people contribute to their families and their communities in different parts of the world.

Key Messages

- Older people are a valuable resource for their societies and should feel valued.
- Good health throughout life helps us make the most of the positive aspects of ageing.
- Societies that take care of their older populations, and support their active participation in daily life, will be better prepared to cope with the changing world.

Calls to Action

Good health in older age can be achieved by:

- Promoting health across the life-course
- Creating age-friendly environments that foster the health and participation of older people
- Providing access to basic primary health care, long-term care and palliative care
- Acknowledging the value of older people and helping them participate fully in family and community life

More information can be obtained at:

<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2012/en/>. ■

Health Information Tips

Seniors, Boost Your Balance - Here are some exercises that can help

(HealthDay News) – A routine that includes a variety of exercises is important to help seniors stay strong. But balance exercises can help reduce the risk of falling and dangerous fractures.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists these exercises that can help improve balance in seniors:

- ◆ Practice Tai Chi, a Chinese martial art.
- ◆ Walk backward, stepping to the side or walking heel to toe.
- ◆ Practice standing on one foot and holding the position.
- ◆ Take group exercise classes that focus on balance.

Overcoming Obstacles to Exercise - Make sure your goals are realistic

(HealthDay News) – Life's problems often get in the way of your best intentions when it comes to exercise. The American Council on Exercise offers these possible solutions to combating exercise "saboteurs":

- ◆ When you're stressed out, schedule time for even a very short workout. Exercise is a great way to fight intense stress, the council says.
- ◆ Don't set unrealistic expectations, which can only result in frustration. Set goals that challenge you, but are attainable.
- ◆ Avoid over training, which can slow your progress. Instead, schedule some down time to help your body rest and recover.
- ◆ When something unexpected comes up, adjust your workout plan accordingly, but don't eliminate exercise entirely.
- ◆ Pump up and motivate yourself with positive thoughts

Seniors Need Their Nutrients - Including calcium and vitamin D

(HealthDay News) – Everyone should eat a healthy, balanced and nutrient-rich diet, especially seniors, who have special nutritional needs.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says these nutrients are especially important as we get older:

- ◆ Vitamin D and calcium, through fortified foods, low-fat dairy products, leafy green vegetables and fish.
- ◆ Vitamin B12, through fish, seafood, lean meats and vitamin B12-fortified cereals.
- ◆ Fiber, through fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- ◆ Potassium, through fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products.
- ◆ Polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats, rather than saturated or trans fats.

Berries Could Boost Brain Health in Aging Populations

Researchers say that a diet rich in phytochemicals from berries could help improve brain health in several ways, such as improving communication pathways and protecting against oxidative stress. A review published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* suggests that strong scientific evidence exists to support the beneficial effects of berries on the brain. The study reported that consumption of blueberries, blackberries, strawberries and other berry fruits has beneficial effects on the brain, and could help prevent age-related memory loss and other changes.

The researchers, led by Barbara Shukitt-Hale from the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, found that berry fruits could help the brain to remain healthy in several ways. The team noted that berry fruits contain high levels of antioxidants that they suggest protect the brain from oxidative stress produced by harmful free radicals. In addition, the review found that berries alter the way neurons in the brain communicate. Shukitt-Hale and her colleagues said these changes in signaling can both prevent inflammation in the brain that contributes to neuronal damage and improve both motor control and cognition. ■

(Source: healthfinder.gov)

New Board Member, Germán Perdomo



Germán Perdomo is Colombian, trained as a physician and surgeon at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. He also holds a Masters in Public Health from the same university.

He worked in Colombia for 18 years in different jobs and positions in the government, in places ranging from the humid tropical jungle of El Chocó, to the arid desert of Guajira, up to Bogota.

He served the Organization for 21 years, as STC in Central America, PWR in Bolivia, staff of the Planning Office in Washington Headquarters, and consultant in Peru.

He has painted with fine and thick brushes since his early childhood, and recently he became a digital painter and a lover of poetry, classical music and opera (although he does not sing). He is also an avid reader of literature, preferably novels and short stories, and he has always been associated with technology.

Committed to the importance of unionizing, he was an active participant in the Staff Association since the first day he started working in the Organization, and now he is an active collaborator in AFSM. ■

New Editor-in-Chief, Marilyn Rice



Marilyn (Marti) Rice is the new Editor-in-Chief of the AFSM Newsletter. She retired from PAHO in May 2011 and currently is CEO of merci, Marilyn E Rice Consulting International, LLC,

an international public health consulting firm. Until May of 2011 she was Senior Advisor in Health Promotion and Urban Health as well as Coordinator of the Urban Health and Determinants of Health Team for the Area of Sustainable Development and Environmental Health at PAHO.

She has over 40 years of experience working in a multicultural, multilingual environment,

often playing the role of a facilitator to help ensure clear communication and collaborative efforts in developing and implementing initiatives. She has done extensive work to support systematic evaluation and documentation of health education and promotion experiences in countries throughout the world and she coordinated and oriented technical cooperation activities in the areas of health promotion, social determinants of health, urban health and development, community mobilization, and implementation of healthy public policies.

She has worked for PAHO for 22 years and the Global Office of WHO for seven. She also has held the position of Project Director of the National Resource Center for Prevention of Perinatal Abuse of Alcohol and Other Drugs, Branch Chief of the Perinatal Branch for the US Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, and Social Mobilization Officer with Management Sciences for Health (MSH) on the BASICS Child Survival Project, working mainly in Senegal and Nigeria. She holds a degree in sociology and masters training in public health and health education.

In her retirement Marti continues to play an important leadership role in her professional associations based in the US, for the Americas and on a global scale. She also continues to participate in her favorite hobbies, such as scuba diving; playing in tennis tournaments; working out at the gym; swimming; participating in book clubs; traveling with her husband, son and friends; visiting her mother and grandchildren; going to the theater; taking photographs; and visiting museums. In the near future she plans to learn to play the piano again, renovate her house and spend more time reading and writing for fun. ■

Welcome to New AFSM Members

From the Washington, DC Area

Jose Ramiro Cruz Lopez

Elizabeth D. Joskowicz

Maria Elena Lopez-Gomez

Remembering Our Colleagues



Luis Carlos Ochoa

We are sad that Dr. Luis Carlos Ochoa, a person at the vanguard of public health and a leader internationally for PAHO/WHO and many countries of the world, including his home of Colombia, passed away in 2011. In his memory we republish here an article he wrote for our newsletter in December 2004.



My Experience at PAHO/WHO

(in his own words)

My first contact with the Pan American Health Organization was through a scholarship program in 1960 to study public health administration in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I subsequently participated in various meetings sponsored by PAHO/WHO. Later on, as Vice Minister of Health of Colombia, I had the occasion to represent the country at the meetings of the Governing Bodies in Washington, DC.

I joined the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to work on a health services project in Argentina. After four years as head of Area IV, serving the four Southern Cone countries, I was transferred to Guatemala as Director of Programs for Central American and Panama, where I served an additional four years. At the end of that term, I was assigned to Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where I was initially responsible for the Division of Health Services Infrastructure. Subsequently, I became the Bureau's Operations Officer;

and, finally, was named Assistant Director, which was the final post of my career with the Organization.

I had the privilege of working under Dr. Abraham Horwitz, Dr. Hector Acuña, and Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, and of sharing responsibilities with Dr. George Alleyne and Dr. Mirta Roses, both of whom later went on to head the Organization.

I had many gratifying and notable experiences, but it is with special pleasure that I recall my participation in the International Conference on Primary Health Care, in Alma-Ata (1978), in the preparation of global documents on Health for All in the Year 2000, and in the evaluation of the first 10 years of the primary care strategy (Riga, U.S.S.R.). I also found especially gratifying my experience as chairman of the WHO working group that studied documents for the World Health Assembly, and the opportunity to travel with the group for a 1-month visit to the Republic of China.

I went back to Colombia with the intention of turning to personal matters again and enjoying a life free of institutional commitments, but, alas, it was not to be. At the request of the ministers of health of the Andean Group and the then Director of PAHO, Dr. Guerra de Macedo, I continued to collaborate from Medellín on Andean Cooperation in Health (ACH), a position that I held until being named Health Secretary of Antioquia. At the conclusion of the administrative term, I served the Ministry of Health of Colombia as an adviser and later put my experience to work once again for my city and country as Secretary of Health of Medellín.

From the academic standpoint, I have always been on the faculty of the National School of Public Health of the University of Antioquia, my alma mater, where I continue to serve, albeit in a limited capacity, as I want to devote more and more time to my private life. I perform some ad-honorem consulting and support services for public sector entities, which I find very gratifying.

I do my best to stay current on the life of our Organization and particularly of its Representative Office in Colombia. I consider my service to such a prestigious organization as PAHO/WHO, with its noble, humanitarian purpose, one of the most stimulating experiences of my lifetime and a source of immense pride and satisfaction.

My children – one in Colombia, another in Venezuela, and the remaining four in the United States – have jobs that allow them to lead a good life and support their

families. We visit them often, and in so doing I have the opportunity to visit the Headquarters of our Organization, because even 13 years into retirement from the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, I am still linked to it spiritually and emotionally.

My wife Amparo and I, and our children, fondly recall our experiences over the years. We lead modest lives, we do our best to grow old with dignity, and we give thanks to God for all He has given us in this life, and especially for our experiences at PAHO/WHO.



We wish to express our sincere condolences to the family of Dr. Luis Carlos Ochoa, who will long be remembered for his tremendous contributions to world health. ■

<i>In Memoriam</i>	
DEATHS REPORTED IN 2011 AND 2012	
Enid G. Harden	2 May 2011
Ricardo Carbo	14 July 2011
Claudia Barrera de Galvis	11 August 2011
Carlos Alves de Abreu	28 August 2011
Julia Nelly Rodo Navea	3 October 2011
Harvey William Pritchett	9 October 2011
Octavio Azcuy	27 October 2011
Raquel Betancourt	6 November 2011
Antonio Laurindo	18 December 2011
Arino da Silveira Guedes	8 January 2012
Walter Ramos Conceição	10 January 2012
Joao Batista	3 February 2012
Nelly de Ruesta	25 February 2012
Edmundo Izurieta	29 February 2012
Irene Arkebauer	7 March 2012
Ruben Belizky	14 March 2012
Alberto Florez Munoz	11 April 2012

The Back Page

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, write to:

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Contact Information

Please refer to your 2012 **AFSM Directory** and be certain that all your personal contact information is correct. We also encourage you to provide us with your email address so that important and pertinent information can be electronically mailed to you. Any changes or additions to your address 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



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Note: The term of each member of the BOD expires in December of the year in parentheses.

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