A History of the Pan American Health Organization
VENTURES
IN WORLD HEALTH

The Memoirs of
FRED LOWE SOPER

John Duffy, Editor

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office of the
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

1977
Chronology

- 1902-1920------In the beginning
- 1920-1946------The burgeoning bureau
- 1946-1958------Regional call to arms
- 1958-1975------The right to health
- 1975-1983------Towards Health for All
- 1983-1992------Health & Development
- 1992-2002------Equity, PanAmericanism
In the Beginning
International Health Organizations

The origins and history of International Health Organizations are bound up with the history of infectious disease, and Cholera is the prototypic example.

Cholera? the most feared of the infectious diseases
Sanitary Conferences

1851 – 1903 – Eleven Sanitary Conferences
– Four Sanitary Conventions

1. Sanitary measures – ships – Suez Canal
2. Agreement notification of cholera
3. Hygiene measures for pilgrim ships
4. Obligatory notification of plague
First International Sanitary Conference
Paris July, 1851

- Delegates – 12 countries (1 physician 1 diplomat)
- Delegates Purpose – Regulate in a uniform way the quarantine and Lazarettos of the Mediterranean
- Focus – Cholera
- Result – Failed: No convention

(Lasted 6 months)
1870 - Yellow fever in Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina - 15,000 + deaths in Buenos Aires

1866 - Cholera in the USA - 50,000 deaths

1900 – Bubonic plague in San Francisco, USA - 122 deaths
In 1880 a Joint Resolution of Senate and Congress authorized the President to convene an international sanitary conference in Washington, DC.

“…to which the several powers having jurisdiction of ports likely infected with yellow fever or cholera shall be invited to send delegates properly authorized, for the purpose of securing an international system of notification as the actual sanitary conditions of ports – and of vessels sailing therefrom…”

Goodman 1971
Pan American Health Organization

- 1881 – Fifth International Sanitary Conference (Washington, DC) (Presentation by Carlos Finlay)
- 1890 – First International Conference of American States (Washington, DC)
- 1901 – Second International Conference (Mexico) Decision to convene a general convention of representatives of the Health Organizations
- 1902 – First Sanitary Convention of the Americas Republics (Washington, DC) Formation of what has become PAHO
1902 International Sanitary Bureau (ISB) Formed by 2nd International Conference of American States
First Convention

“We have come together to give one another interesting and necessary information about ourselves.”

(Surgeon General Wyman)
1st. Sanitary Convention of American Republics (1902)

“Fourth, our deliberations will relate to scientific investigations, which alone enable us to be rational in both quarantine and sanitation, and which form the stone foundation and the iron girders of our hygienic structure.”

S/G Wyman
Resolution of the First Convention

- Permanent HQ in Washington, DC
- “that it shall be the duty of the International Sanitary Bureau to urge each Republic to promptly and regularly transmit to said bureau all data of every character relative to the sanitary conditions of their ports and territories”
Hugh Cumming, Director 1920-1947

★ Budget $500-$20,000
★ The first country Staff - Dr. Long
★ Publication of the Boletin – Information
★ The Sanitary Code, Havana, 1925
★ Establishment of annual Directing Council
Dr. John D. Long
Pan American Sanitary Code

The standardization of the measures employed at places of entry, for the prevention of the introduction and spread of the communicable diseases of man, so that greater protection against them shall be achieved and unnecessary hindrance to international commerce and communication eliminated.
Fred Soper 1947-1959

- Future of the Bureau threatened
- WHO formed in 1948
- 1949 Agreement with WHO-PAHO becomes Regional Office of WHO
- 1950 Agreement with OAS-specialized InterAmerican Organization
- Formation of regional centers-INCAP, Panaftosa, CEPANZO, INPAZ
- Major effort to eradicate Aedes Aegypti
Budget increased to $1.3 Million-$1 million from voluntary contributions
Soper “had WHO been well funded in 1947, PASB probably would have been simply its regional organization”
Finally, on 24 May 1949, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Brock Chisholm, and the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Dr. Soper, penned the agreement
PAHO as a Specialized Agency of the UN and Inter-American System

PAHO

Specialized Agency of the organization of American States

Inter-American System

UN System

Regional Office of the World Health Organization
Objectives of PAHO

Constitution of the Pan American Health Organization

The Fundamental purposes of the Pan American Health Organization shall be to promote and coordinate the efforts of the countries of the Western Hemisphere to combat disease, lengthen life, and promote the physical and mental health of the people.
Abraham Horwitz 1959-1975

- Concentration on Communicable diseases-environmental sanitation-nutrition-MCH-Research-Human Resources
- Charter of Punta del Este-increase LE by 5 years-improve individual and collective health.
- Emphasis on health planning and health service organization
- Creation of Zone offices
Hector Acuña 1975-1983

- Alma Ata 1978
- Promotion of Primary Health Care
- Expansion of Organization - almost double-incorporation of Caribbean countries
- Revolving Fund for vaccines production
Carlyle Guerra de Macedo-1983-1995

- Rebirth of democracy-major economic crisis-structural adjustment-
- Focus on health and development-appointment of health economist
- Abolition of Zone offices
- The country as the basic unit of production-the management of knowledge
Major thrust in immunization-polio eradication-appearance of HIV-cholera

Subregional programs-Central America-Health as a bridge for peace; Andean initiative- Caribbean CCH

Questioning role of centers

Massive expansion of staff with appointment of nationals
El Salvador
The Last Case of Polio
George Alleyne 1995-2003

- Equity-Panamericanism
- Technical cooperation vs Technical assistance-TCC and not TCDC
- Information-critical tool-HIV-Dengue
- Evaluation-programmatic and personnel-Country offices
- Beginning of evolution of centers
- Essential Public Health Functions-Shared Agenda
Evolution of PAHO
Three phases

Phase 1-
Small central office, receiving sanitary information

Prevention of spread/entry of infectious agents-Sanitary Code-quarantine-facilitation of trade and commerce
Evolution of PAHO

Phase 2
- Control of infections in countries-
  sanitation-vector control-Human resource development
Emphasis on activities in-country-Country offices
Regional Office of WHO
Evolution of PAHO

Phase 3
Concern for regional –trans-border issues-convening power to achieve impact on communicable as well as non-communicable diseases-equity issues-concern with instrumental value of health-partnerships-technical cooperation
Why a PAHO will always be necessary

The “international” in health for addressing health problems
Knowledge of the risk factors and their determinants
The technical capacity to respond
The unrivalled capacity to produce data and use information
The advantages of history, geography and culture.
Celebrating 100 years of Health
The teamwork exhibited by PAHO and its partners has become a unifying, democratizing force, empowering women and communities and drawing countries closer together in networks of knowledge and mutual aid. Where once fatalism reigned among the great mass of people, today there is hope—more ever than before. That is a record that PAHO can and should be proud of.