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the directing council*

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FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM

Introduction

In the documentation for the XVII Pan American Sanitary Conference an item was proposed by the Government of Chile recommending certain changes in the Organization's Fellowship program and presenting a resolution to the Conference (see Annex 1 attached). In the course of the meeting, however, the delegate of Chile withdrew the resolution and suggested that the item regarding the fellowships program be discussed instead by the Executive Committee. The following presentation is made in order to give the Committee the necessary information regarding the fellowship program. If further data are needed or if the question is referred to the Directing Council, additional documentation will be provided.

Even though the Member Countries of the Organization are continually making enormous efforts to enlarge national institutions teaching medicine and the related sciences at both the under-graduate and the graduate level, international assistance is still necessary to enable them to meet normal needs for training teaching, and health service personnel.

Furthermore, the continuing growth of national health services is leading to a marked increase in the demand for well-trained professional and auxiliary health workers, and is under-scoring the shortage of teachers.

Aims of the Fellowships Program

Because of this situation most of the countries have had to make some use, year after year, of the Organization's fellowships program in order to speed up the training of such personnel. This is why the fellowship program whose purpose is primarily national rather than personal or individual was markedly expanded (69%) between 1959 (505 fellowships) and 1966 (854 fellowships), with a view to systematically contributing to the technical scientific and socio-economic development of the countries concerned.

In accordance with the decisions of the Governing Bodies of the Organization, the fellowship program is one of the most effective ways of;

- a) assisting in the strengthening of health services;
- b) promoting improved standards of teaching and training in the health, medical, and related professions;
- c) promoting cooperation and encouraging exchange of information among scientific and professional groups that contribute to the advancement of health.

#### Type of training

To achieve these aims the program provides opportunities and the necessary facilities for training and study abroad in health, medical, and scientific fields not available in the candidates own country. Such study or training may take the form of:

- a) attendance at academic courses, especially those leading to a post-graduate certificate, degree or diploma;
- b) short courses sponsored by the Organization and dealing with a subject related to some program of particular interest to the Member Governments and the Organization; and
- c) observation visits for varying periods of time to teaching centers and health services.

#### Priorities

In line with long-term economic and social planning advocated by the countries and the Organization, efforts are made to ensure that the fellowships are an integral part of a national health program in operation or about to be started. Preference is therefore given to candidates working in programs being conducted with the assistance of the Organization, or holding key posts in health services. High priority is also given to fellowships intended to promote facilities and services for university teaching, and post-basic education of professional and auxiliary personnel. The order of priorities is of course influenced by the need for qualified personnel for strengthening health services; lack of local training facilities; the inclusion in the national budget of the allotments necessary to ensure that use is made of fellows on their return home; the assurance given by the Government concerned that a candidate's absence during his studies abroad will not adversely affect his status, security, salary, pension, and similar rights, and especially that it will make full use of the knowledge and experience gained by the fellow on his return home.

### Selection

The selection of suitable fellows is one of the most important acts in the whole process of awarding a fellowship. The attention given and the efforts devoted to selection are always very worth while, since the success of the fellowship program depends in large measure on the way in which selection is made. The first persons to take a hand in this selection process are government officials, since every fellowship application is processed only at the expressed request of the Member Governments, through the national health authorities or university authorities as the case may be. This is a sine qua non of every fellowship application. Some countries have set up within their government administration a special fellowship selection committee composed of officials of the Ministry of Health and of educational institutions, and of representatives of the professional group to which the fellowship applicant belongs. Experience has shown that in those countries this is the best way of selecting fellows.

### Commitments

It should be pointed out that the fellowship program cannot be operated successfully unless each of the parties concerned in processing a fellowship application meet their commitments. The parties concerned are the Government, the Organization, and the applicant.

The government must certify that "the studies to be made under this fellowship are necessary for the strengthening of the national health service of the country", and that "in the case of a fellowship being granted, full use will be made of a fellow in the field covered by his fellowship", and further that "the absence of the candidate during his studies abroad will not have any adverse effect on his status, seniority, salary, pension and similar rights, and that "on return from the fellowship it is proposed to employ the fellow" (page 1 of the Fellowship Application).

The Organization provides financial assistance for studies, establishes the appropriate plans for study, and makes arrangements to ensure that the fellow gets the greatest benefit from his studies, and pursues them in the most appropriate places.

The candidate undertakes to return to his home country at the end of the fellowship and to continue in, or enter, the services of his national health administration - or a technical institution approved by it - for at least the first three years after completion of his fellowship (page 5 of the Fellowship Application).

The Organization honors its undertaking once it has awarded a fellowship. Only exceptional circumstances such as lack of capacity to complete studies, or a breach of discipline would lead to the cancellation of a fellowship. The fellow also honors his undertaking and returns home upon completion of his studies.

There are of course always a few cases where a fellow refuses to return to his country at the end of his training, usually for "political reasons", but sometimes because of the lure of personal gain elsewhere, better known as the "brain drain". These have, however, been the rare exceptions in the past eight years. On the other hand, some - fortunately very few - governments do not honor their pledge to pay fellows their salary during the course of their fellowship, and to employ them on their return home; they cease to pay salary or give only a "fellowship grant", which is a very small proportion of the salary. This situation obviously hampers the efficient conduct of the fellowship program, since many candidates refuse at the last minute to accept a fellowship, or if they accept it and do not receive their salary, there are nearly always unpleasant financial and family problems which have a prejudicial effect on their studies.

#### Fellowship conditions

Fellowships are awarded in accordance with the regulations set out in the WHO/PAHO Manuals and the Fellowship Information booklet (see Annex 2). Normally, fellowships are awarded for not more than one year or less than six months. However, when justified, fellowship for longer or shorter periods may be granted in order to tailor them to the specific needs of a fellow. The financial assistance provided by the Organization is intended to cover only those costs which are directly related to his studies, such as:

- a) international travel, and travel in the country of study;
- b) tuition fees, and the costs of visits included in the study program;
- c) a monthly stipend which is paid in the currency of the country of study, and which varies in amount from one country to another, according to the cost of living and the regulations of the Special Committee of the United Nations composed of representatives of all the specialized agencies conducting fellowship programs;
- d) a book grant, the amount of which varies according to the length of the fellowship and the nature of the studies; and,
- e) Excess baggage when the fellowship is for a period longer than 2 months.

#### Stipends

The monthly stipend is not a salary or an honorarium; it is an allowance for room, board, and incidentals, paid to a fellow while on official assignment for study abroad. It is not supposed to cover the fellow's routine expenses at home for himself or for his family, and should therefore not be regarded as a substitute for any salary paid to a fellow at home. This underscores the importance of the governments continuing to pay the salaries of fellows while absent abroad, since the monthly stipend only covers the expenses of one person.

On various occasions the Directing Council has discussed the possibility of establishing different types of fellowships in accordance with the professional or academic status of the candidate; his professional background; the post he holds; and the number of his dependents. But all the agencies in the United Nations family are opposed to this system, and have repeatedly stressed the difficulties involved in dividing fellows into various classes since the methods of education, designation of posts, grades and titles vary very considerably from one country to another, and therefore would prevent a clear line of demarcation being established between the classes. Moreover, it is essential for all the international agencies providing funds for fellowships to have coordinated and uniform procedures. To be sure, there are certain private foundations which award different types of fellowships and pay family allowances. However, it must be borne in mind that these foundations operate on a very small scale and in very limited fields. Another point to bear in mind is that any increase in the funds for a fellowship, either by way of family or other allowances, would undoubtedly have an effect on the program and would lead to a reduction in the annual number of fellowships awarded, since the funds available to the programs are limited. It must also be pointed out that any recommendations to change the system and the regulations governing the fellowship program would first have to be agreed to by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Program, since a great many of the fellowships awarded by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau are financed with funds from those organizations. Failure to obtain such an agreement would raise difficult problems in that it would be necessary to administer a fellowship program with two separate sets of fellowship regulations, and certain almost paradoxical situations would arise, for example, that of having two fellows studying the same subject, in the same place, but receiving different stipends.

These were the reasons which on previous occasions led to the rejection of suggestions to establish different classes of fellowships and to include family allowances.

#### Selection of Place of Study

Another aspect of the fellowship program which is as important as the selection of fellows is the selection of the place of study. This phase of the work proceeds smoothly, thanks to the active assistance and goodwill of the national health administrations, and as well as the willingness of university institutions to accept fellows of the Organization. This has undoubtedly contributed to the efficient operation of the program. The place of study selected must have the facilities, equipment, services and instructors commensurate with the great effort represented by international studies and the specific needs of each fellow. As far as possible, efforts are made to ensure that fellows pursue their studies in an environment which is different from what they are used to, so that they can be stimulated by new ideas, and ways of doing things but which at the same time has living conditions and health problems similar to those of their home country. This arrangement

facilitates the adaptation of the fellow in his country of study and his return home, and also his understanding of the new knowledge acquired during his studies. Hence, most of the fellows pursue their studies in Latin American countries, and only go to the United States, Canada or other developed countries to study if they have the necessary experience to discern what is useful and suitable for their own country, or wish to pursue a course of study which is only available in a particular institution there.

#### Contact with Fellows

The Fellowship Branch is in permanent contact with the fellows during their fellowship, by means of personal interviews either at Headquarters, or at the place of study, or through correspondence. Periodical visits to fellows have been found to be of great benefit both in facilitating their adaptation and in preventing some of the problems which always arise for persons who are travelling abroad for the first time.

#### Evaluation

For the purpose of evaluation, contact is maintained with ex-fellows for a period of not less than 2 years after the end of their fellowships. At the end of his fellowship, a fellow is required to submit a final report and subsequently to submit two additional reports on the opportunities he has had for applying the knowledge gained during his fellowship, the post he is holding, and the use being made of his services. Evaluation studies are made both by the questionnaire follow-up two years after the fellowship and in selected countries, by personal interview.

What has been said above shows that the fellowship program calls for considerable efforts by the authorities of the countries that select and propose applicants for fellowships, by the institutions of the countries, that offer their facilities and services for the training and education of fellows, and by the persons responsible for the administration of the program. Furthermore, the cost of the program accounts for a sizeable portion of the budget of the Organization, which is one of the reasons for our interest in knowing what the results of the fellowship program have been.

The undoubted value of international assistance in the education and training of the certain persons who will subsequently use the knowledge they have acquired to improve the health of their country, has been repeatedly stressed. The Rockefeller Foundation, which has great experience in the field of fellowships, concluded after an evaluation of its program covering a period of 33 years (1917-1950), that, looking back, very few activities of the Foundation appear to be of more enduring and general value.

Efforts have been made on many occasions to assess the value and usefulness of fellowships but these have always run into difficulties. There is not doubt that the selection of fellows and the quality of the studies

they pursue have a major impact on the success or failure of the fellowship program. However, the use which the fellow subsequently makes of the knowledge he has required is the fundamental part of the evaluation.

The second follow-up reports on the utilization of his services, which the ex-fellow should send two years after his return home show that in most cases that they are making appropriate use of the knowledge gained during their fellowship. These studies confirm that made some years ago by the World Health Organization. However, it should be pointed out that all these studies are based on a relatively small number of questionnaires and reports. In view of the scope of the program - 6,757 fellowships between 1954 and 1966, the advisability of making further efforts to evaluate the program by means of personal interviews with a significant number of former fellows in various countries, is under consideration. According to experience this is the only efficient method of obtaining valid conclusions.

### Conclusion

This report clearly shows that the fellowship program constitutes an important part of the activities of the Organization; that it covers many fields of activities; that its operation is sometimes complicated due to the number of problems it is necessary to solve, and especially, because, all the activities relate basically to individuals. Despite the fact that on many occasions some fellowship applicants express plans and desires for rather similar types of training, it is not always possible to prepare a similar program for all of them. There is an enormous variation among fellows in the matter of personality, concern with personal comfort, likes and dislikes, self-reliance, and adaptability to other environments or countries. Even in the simplest of cases, there is a myriad of details to be solved with each fellowship.

As a result of the active participation and mutual efforts of all concerned with the fellowship program, there have been very few serious problems. Every fellow who goes abroad to study undoubtedly receives appropriate training for his future activities. At the same time he joins the increasing number of men and women throughout the world who are directly acquiring experience and knowledge of their fellow men in this way. It is therefore worth-while giving him the advice he needs to successfully accomplish his task, and to discharge his duties in an efficient and effective way.

Annexes

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ANNEX I: DOCUMENT GSPL7/30



# XVII Pan American Sanitary Conference

## XVIII Regional Committee Meeting



Washington, D. C., U.S.A.  
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### FELLOWSHIP REGULATIONS

#### Item proposed by the Government of Chile

Fellowships are a very useful tool of technical assistance. Although the Organization awards them at the request of Governments, in accordance with existing agreements and the guidelines which the Member Countries have laid down at Conferences, there are nevertheless occasions in which the expected return from them is not obtained.

The Government of Chile has also noted that the present regulations which are common to all the United Nations agencies and were drawn up in agreement with the Member Countries, can be improved. Accordingly, it considers it advisable that a clear distinction should be made between at least two main types of fellowships:

Fellowships proper: for training in regular academic courses, and other similar means, which are preferably intended for young persons preparing for future activities;

Travel grants: for observation and improvement of individuals who have already gained experience, and are responsible for posts of considerable or major responsibilities.

The first would train future leaders; the second would enable present leaders to keep themselves up-to-date. Although the present officials of the Organization have handled the fellowship program along these lines, the policy could be formulated more concretely in the appropriate regulations, by establishing standards for each type of fellowship in accordance with their particular purpose. Thus, for example in fellowships, proper for young persons, it might be possible to consider a "family allowance", for which regulations would be drawn up, since it is obvious that the presence of a student's family is a positive factor in his studies, as is recognized by many private foundations. It would thus supplement the direct contribution of the beneficiary countries which frequently cannot do more than continue to pay the fellow's salary. For travel grants, it

might be possible to consider also some procedure for which regulations would be issued, which would make it possible to take up such grants with the speed with which the need to request this type of assistance very often presents itself.

The Government of Chile therefore wishes to propose the following

RESOLUTION:

To recommend to the Member Countries that they improve their systems of applying for fellowships and travel grants, through the appropriate selection of candidates, and in such a way that the training requested derives fundamentally from the requirements of national health plans, as they exist at present or for preparing for future expansion;

To request the Director of the Bureau that, in such form as is deemed appropriate and with the active participation of the Member Countries, an evaluation be made of the fellowships awarded in the last five years;

To request the Director to undertake, by such means as he deems appropriate, a review of the present system of fellowships bearing in mind the new circumstances of the countries, and the suggestions submitted by Member Countries;

To recommend that the ideas presented above be submitted in an appropriate way to the other agencies of the United Nations, and other bodies and institutions which give this type of technical assistance in the health field.

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ANNEX II

( Will be distributed separately)