

working party of
the regional committee

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

92nd Meeting Washington, D.C. June 1984

> CE92/INF/1 (Eng.) 25 May 1984 ORIGINAL: SPANISH

FINAL REPORT

MEETING ON CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL México, D.F., 17-20 January 1984

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MEETING ON CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL

México, D.F: 17-20 January 1984

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INAUGURATION

The meeting was inaugurated on 17 January 1984. Dr. Pablo Isaza, PAHO/WHO Representative in Mexico, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director, Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, and expressed the interest that the Pan American Health Organization has in the cervical cancer control programs. In addition, he discussed the magnitude of this problem in the countries of the Region. Next, Dr. Jose Laguna, "Subsecretario de Asistencia", spoke on behalf of the host country for this important event and officially opened the meeting.

Dr. Jorge Litvak, Coordinator of the Adult Health Program, pointed out that the objective of the meeting was to discuss new strategies to tie-in the diversity of components of the cervical cancer control programs, so as to decrease the incidence and mortality due to this disease in the countries of our Region. He also explained that the meeting was composed of five panels, each one identified with one of the fundamental components of the programs. He explained that the participants, divided into three working groups, would meet after each session and discuss the theme, expose their experiences and present the pertinent recommendations. He emphasized that the goal of the meeting was to formulate a Plan of Action that would allow the countries to revise their strategies so as to structure a control program, either on a limited or national scale, and to identify concrete actions for PAHO's technical cooperation to the countries.

The group appointed Dr. Julieta Calderón de Laguna as President, Dr. Armando López Scavino as Vice-President; and Dr. William C. Reeves and Dr. Rodrigo Prado as General Rapporteurs.

Theme 1. Registration Strategies

Al three working groups emphasized that cancer registries must function as part of an integrated cervical cancer control program (and not as independent entities). In addition, considerable discussion was devoted to the importance of reliable cancer mortality registry in addition to cancer incidence. The objective of cervical cancer control programs is to reduce female morbidity as well as excess female mortality due to this cancer. Mortality statistics are routinely collected by all governments and cancer registries must work with existing Vital Statistics units to insure that complete, precise, and current cancer mortality data is available to the Cancer Registry and that information from the

cancer registry is available to the Vital Statistics Unit. Efforts should be made to correct deficiencies in death statistics (such as the proportion of deaths due to ill-defined symptoms).

Population based cervical cancer incidence data collected by a registry is desirable to operate a control program. However, establishing such a registry should not take priority over initiating screening programs. Population-based cancer registries exist in many areas (national, state, county, and city) and should collaborate closely with cervical control programs. Where such registries do not exist, some type of registration system should be initiated as part of the control program. Existing data services which might be used to support a registry include: hospitals, pathology, and cytology laboratories and specialty clinics such as radiotherapy and gynecology. The type of registry and extent of coverage will be defined by local conditions. main objective of all registries is to provide information for use in planning, monitoring, and evaluating control programs. This information is especially important for providing continuity of care.

All three working groups also discussed the type of information registries should collect and the type of statistical analysis they should prepare. There was general agreement that basic information outlined in the Manual of Norms and Procedures for Cervical Cancer Control should be included in all registries. Several examples of data collection forms from functioning Latin American registries are included in Annexes of the WHO Handbook for Standardized Cancer Registries, OMS-Geneva 1976 (Serie Offset No. 25) and "Seminarios sobre registros de câncer en América Latina (Cali, Colombia, septiembre 1969) (Publicación Científica No. 215, Serie 2, 1970)"; these deal in detail with collection and coding of registry data.

Complete individual identification is necessary to avoid duplicate registration and to insure follow-up but individual confidentiality need to be protected. Use of national identification numbers such as the identification card (cédula de ciudadanía) is the best way to achieve this.

Other information which should be collected by registries includes the total number of women screened, the number of cytology specimens evaluated, the number of positive cases, the number of tissue diagnoses and the number of treated cases. Standardized current nomenclature and numerical codes such as ICD-9* and ICD-0** should be used by registries. Similarly, Cancer Incidence in Five Continents, *** is an excellent international reference for standard statistical analysis.

The following suggestions were presented by the working groups with respect to registration strategies.

- 1. PAHO research grant program give high priorities to funding operational research concerning cancer registration and epidemiologic evaluation of cancer control programs.
- 2. Emphasis should be placed in using computer data processing in health registries and control programs and that PAHO serve as a coordinating or reference center regarding standardization of hardware and software.
- 3. That PAHO continue to collaborate in the training in cancer epidemiology, cancer registries, and other cancer control methods.
- 4. It was suggested that PAHO give support to existing cancer registries in the Region and facilitate the exchange of information among them.

^{*} International Classification of Diseases, Revision 9, OPS, 1978. (Scientific Publications Nos. 353 and 353-A),

^{**} International Classification of Diseases for Oncology. WHO-Geneva, 1976.

^{***} Cancer Incidence in Five Continents, Volume IV, World Health Organization, Geneve, Switzerland; International Agency for Research on Cancer and International Association of Cancer Registries, Lyon, France. IARC Publications No. 42, 1982.

Theme 2. Role of Cancer Societies

This meeting had a special significance because it is one of the first international meetings designed for Government representatives, health professionals, and voluntary cancer societies to discuss implementation of collaborative cervical cancer control programs. Formal presentation by panelists and discussions by the working groups reflected considerable differences in norms and operating procedures. there was unanimous agreement that formally constituted volunteer cancer societies must function collaboratively with the Ministry of Health in accord with national policy. The Cancer Society should follow the norms for cervical cancer control elaborated by the Ministry of Health with the different medical institutions. The cancer society provides a between the Ministry of Health cancer control programs and the community, Thus cancer societies should include especially in public education. representatives of professional groups (medical societies, hospitals, cancer institutes, etc.), prominent public figures, and members of the general community. Community representation in cancer societies must include representatives from high risk minority groups. Cancer societies must have an important role in cancer programs so that qualified people from all levels will decide to participate.

All three working groups agreed that cancer societies have four functions regarding cervical cancer control:

1. Information and Education

The societies should actively participate in education programs for health professionals at all levels. The societies should be a major source of community education concerning cervical cancer and its control. Available resources for community education include the Ministry of Education; mass media (including press, radio, and television, with local dialects used when appropriate); places where people work; places where people meet, such as clubs and organizations, churches, health fairs, schools, in small groups at homes, doctor's offices, and clinics, etc. Community education concerning cervical cancer should not be limited to women; men should be included. Societies also serve as source for the political decision that representatives must take in local, state, and national governments.

2. Fund Raising

Societies are the major source of nongovernmental funds available for the control and treatment of cervical cancer. The utilization of funds should be determined by local and national sociaety priorities and are for cervical screening programs best coordinated with governmental activities. Funds are used for initial training of health professionals (cytotechnology courses, conferences, fellowships), small equipment (microscopes, specula) capital expenses (computers, radiotherapy apparatus, mobile clinics, new buildings) when other sources are not available, such as: patient aid (purchase of pharmaceuticals, transportation, childcare, temporary lodging) and research (in epidemiology, health services, treatment).

3. Daily operations of control programs

Cancer society volunteers frequently play a key role in the operation of screening programs. Specific activities include recruiting participants working at neighborhood screening clinics, and patient follow-up. Volunteer cancer societies are uniquely suited to assure patient follow-up at the neighborhood level. Cancer society volunteers may also work in cancer registry programs and at cancer treatment centers. Cancer leagues should not directly operate the cancer control programs and neither should they be responsible for totally financing the respective programs.

4. Political activity

A unique characteristic of cancer societies is that they include representatives from all society levels (public health, professional societies, business leaders, and the community). These societies can influence the allocation of public funding, the emphasis on legislation and other norms concerning public health and can assist in cooperation with legislative programs at all levels.

Theme 3. Laboratory Organization

There was consensus among the three working groups that the Cytology Laboratory is a fundamental element of a cervical cancer control program because they are responsible for pap-smear interpretation. The laboratory responsibilities can include not only the processing and timely report of the cervical cytology specimens, but also all functions necessary to coordinate the several components of the program (follow-up, hystopathologic diagnosis, and treatment).

It is important that the organization of cytology laboratories be planned in accord with the area their screening program will cover. The area and its population must be characterized to allow evaluation of the coverage and effect of the screening program. Because of this, it is most efficient to organize a central laboratory in each region. This will ensure lower operational costs and greater diagnostic accuracy. Cervical cytology program cost-benefit analyses show that the operational cost of laboratories, which process at least 50,000 exams annually, do so at a third the cost of a laboratory processing 10,000 or fewer specimens annually. In addition, a large number of samples insures a large number of positive cases, which are fundamental to maintain a high level of proficiency of laboratory staff.

The cytological results must be reported using standard nomenclature such as presented in the Manual both to assure quality control and to allow comparison of results with other laboratories. When a numerical system of classification is used, the report must also include a description suggesting the hystologic diagnosis.

It is preferable that the cytology laboratories be coordinated with the country laboratory network; their distribution and level of complexity must be in accordance with the overall distribution of the country's diagnostic and treatment services.

Two levels of professional training are required for a cytology service.

a) Cytopathologists

Must be physicians, preferably pathologists, or gynecologists, with formal training in cytology, and should be certified according to the country legislation and actual norms.

b) Cytotechnologists

The minimum requirements must be similar to those of other medical technical personnel in the country, they must have formal training in cytotechnology and be certified according to the legislation and current norms in the country.

It is necessary to plan cytology training programs to reflect projected utilization, so as not to have a great number of trained personnel without employment. There was consensus in the importance of having facilities for continuing education of personnel to maintain high levels of proficiency and as an incentive to retain experienced technical personnel.

The laboratory must have a data registration system that allows internal quality control and adequate follow-up and control of abnormal cytology cases. There was consensus that follow up of positive cases must be initiated through the primary and secondary level of the general health system (screening test or cervical pathology centers), but that the responsibility for rapid notification belongs to the cytology laboratory. In this sense, the follow-up of cases is related with the Registry system.

Theme 4. Diagnosis and Treatment

In all the discussion groups, it was clear that the majority of countries are well equipped for treating cervical cancer patients—but this did not universally apply to the newly independent small member states with populations of circa 100,000. The major problem is adequate screening of women from high risk populations to detect cases with pre-invasive lesions. Therefore, countries must analyze and define high risk female populations and use this information as a basis for planning adequate use of resources not only for detection, but also for subsequent definitive diagnosis, treatment, and evaluation.

Resource planning for diagnosis and treatment should be carried out at the level of the Ministry. The program coverage should be taken into consideration, so that the resources assigned are sufficient to cover the number of cases detected.

The definitive diagnosis of abnormal cytology cases should be carried out at the secondary care level of the country's health services program, in gynecology specialty clinics. The definitive diagnosis should always be histopathological, based on colposcopic or cone biopsies. It is essential that the histopathological results are reported based on uniform descriptive nomenclatures, preferably those suggested in the Manual.

Those cases with confirmed diagnosis of intraepithelial neoplasia (dysplasia and carcinoma in situ) should be treated by the gynecology services of secondary care level hospitals, according to internationally accepted therapeutic protocols which are standardized by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with specialists in tertiary level health care.

The participants of all the groups agreed that conservative treatment of intraepithelial lesions with cryotherapy diathermocoagulation or laser was quite satisfactory but only under expert guidance.

Treatment of patients with confirmed diagnosis of invasive carcinoma should be carried out in specialized tertiary care health centers, by specialists well versed in all branches of oncology. The diagnostic evaluation and therapeutic decisions should be in agreement with internationally accepted protocols as standardized by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with tertiary health specialists. In planning for the control program it is necessary to estimate the additional demand which will be placed on tertiary care services early in the screening programs.

The diagnosis and treatment activities implemented at the secondary and tertiary levels are part of cervical cancer control and the results must be communicated in timely fashion to existing cancer registry systems to insure proper overall program coordination and assure patient follow-up.

It was recommended that emphasis be given to the developent of clinical trials for evaluating the different modalities of cervical cancer treatment in Latin America and that the collaboration of the Pan American Health Organization be requested in this area.

Theme 5. Administrative Structure

It was the consensus of all three working groups that cervical cancer control programs derive from the Ministry of Health in relation to national health policty. The program must be formally constituted by the Ministry of Health; this is necessary not only for planning and organization, but also to assure continuous future operation. The medical community and the Cancer Society should work closely with the Ministry of Health to achieve this.

It was the consensus of all three working groups that the Ministry of Health had responsibility for planning, establishing procedures and norms, monitoring the program, and assuring that it evolves over time. The Ministry should delegate responsibility for the cervical cancer control program to an existing unit (such as Maternal and Child Health or Health of the Adult) or should create a new special unit. To assure maximal efficiency, the central level cancer control program must be completely integrated with existing ministry of Health Divisions as well as nongovernmental institutions such as the Cancer Society.

A major problem in initiating and operating cancer control programs concerns utilization of human and physical resources. A balance must be achieved at the national level between preventive and curative services. Formal analyses must be made as to existing resources which can be dedicated to the cancer program or which can be shared with other programs. Before purchasing expensive new equipment an analysis should be made as to less expensive options and whether maintenance facilities for the new equipment exist.

Administration of resources for the program depends upon the political-administrative conditions of each country. In all cases precise demographic and epidemiologic information is necessary to assure optimal local allocation of resources. Administration should be from a central level (national, regional, state, or local) and adequate funding must be designated for the program. At the local operational level a complete census should be made of all resources in the area and the cancer control program should be coordinated with these resources. Such resources include the Ministry of Health, medical societies, cancer societies, universities, and comunal groups.

International as well as national cooperation is very important for the success of such cancer control programs. It was recommended by one working group that PAHO compile data concerning Latin American cervical cancer control programs and also compile lists of technical support (for example in the maintenance of diagnostic, treatment, and data processing apparatus).

CONCLUSIONS

Cervical cancer remains a major cause of mortality in young women in the countries of the Region, in spite of the spectacular decrease in cervical cancer mortality achieved by several countries with national control programs organized acording to the principles discussed in this meeting.

The organization of effective cervical cancer control programs requires a political decision by the Ministry of Health, formal planning of the various program components, coordination of different official and voluntary agencies related to these components and integration of the program into all levels of women's health care.

Those countries that do not already have this type of program and intend to initiate one. whether on a limited or the countrywide level, must analyze the existing situation so as to prepare a plan of action.

This plan will permit the identification of the resources that must be obtained as well as the enumeration of existing resources. The Pan American Health Organization will collaborate in this planning with countries that request it; collaboration will generally be in the form of specialized temporary consultants.

Technical cooperation is necessary for the planning and implementation of effective control programs. This must be requested by Governments from international agencies, and coordinated through PAHO.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The President, the general Rapporteurs, the participants, and the Members of the Secretariat express their sincere thanks and appreciation to the American Cancer Society for its cosponsorship and valuable contribution to this meeting.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ARGENTINA

Dr. S. Felicitas Lewis Programa Nacional de Control de cáncer Ministerio de Salud Pública Defensa 120 - 40. piso, Oficina 4014 Buenos Aires

Dr. Guillermo di Paola Médico Asesor, Ministerio de Salud Pública Arribeños 1212 Buenos Aires 1426

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Oscar José Verdier Liga Argentina de Lucha contra el Cáncer (LAILEC) Virrey Lorelo 1766 Buenos Aires

BARBADOS

Dr. Jean Lenore Harney Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health Bridgetown

Dr. Harry Jerome Skeete Head, Department of Radiotherapy Queen Elizabeth Hospital Bridgetown

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Dorothy Cooke-Johnson Honorary Secretary Barbados Cancer Society Uplands Medical Centre Bellevue, St. Michael

BRAZIL

Dr. Maria das Merces Pontes Lima Cunha Prof. Universidade Federal de Pernambuco Departamento de Patología-CCS Rua das Gracas, 262, Gracas Recife, PE 50.000

Dr. Rui Luzzatto Patologista e Citopatologista Secretaría da Saúde Av. Carlos Gomes, 1973 90.000 Porto Alegre, RS

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Lygia Pratini de Moraes Presidenta Liga Femenina Combate al Cancer Rua Sarmento Leite 187 Sala 13, Hospital Santa Rita 90,000 Porto Alegre, RS

Av. José Bonifácio, 529, Apt. 51 90,000 Porto Alegre, RS

CHILE

Dr. Juan Arraztoa Profesor Cirugía Hospital Universidad Católica Santiago

Dr. Mario González Rojas Jefe, Departamento de Programación Ministerio de Salud Mac Ives 541 Santiago

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Teresa Consolaro de Simonetti Presidenta Ejecutiva Voluntariado Damas Verde Santiago

COLOMBIA

Dr. Francisco Soto Jefe, Servicio de Salud de Caldas Gobernación 20. piso, oficina 205 Manizales

Dr. Jairo Alberto Barragán Espinosa Jefe, Sección Atención Materna Ministerio de Salud Pública Calle 16 No. 7-39 Bogotá, D.E.

Calle 96 No. 28-70, Apt. 207, Torre 2 Bogotá, D.E.

COSTA RICA

Dr. Francisco Fuster Ginecólogo Oncólogo Ministerio de Salud San José

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Virginia León de Mekbel Presidenta Liga contra el cáncer P. O. Box 6782 1,000 San José

CUBA

Dr. Miguel Sosa Marín Funcionario Nivel Central Ministerio de Salud Pública Departamento Nacional Maternoinfantil Calle 23 No. 201 Vedado

O'Tarril No. 10 e/. 10 de octubre y Felipe Poey Vibona Habana

Dr. Evelio Cabezas Director del Programa de Diagnóstico Precoz Ministerio de Salud Pública H 15018 Alta-Habana Habana

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Zoilo Marinello Vidaurreti Director Instituto Nacional de Oncología y Radiobiología Calle 8 No. 512 Miramar-Habana Habana

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dr. Andrés Emilio Peralta Cornielle Vice-Rector Académico Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra Director Médico Instituto Oncológico Regional del Cibao Santo Domingo

Autopista Duarte Km 1 1/2 Pedro Francisco Bono No. 33 Santiago de los Caballeros

Dr. Luis Rojas Grullón Gineco-oncólogo Adscrito Servicio Oncología Hospital Nuestra Señora Altagracia Calle Pedro H. Ureña Santo Domingo

Avenida Coyoacan 1120 Col del Valle, Dpto. 8 Santo Domingo

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Rosa América Martínez de Paredes Ginecóloga Instituto Heriberto Peter Apartado 21396 Santo Domingo

ECUADOR

Dr. Héctor Donoso Velasco Jefe, División Enfermedades Crónicas Ministerio de Salud Estrada No. 125 Quito

Dr. Silvio Torres Sánchez Director Técnico Subsecretaría de Salud, Región II Cerro del Carmen Guayaquil

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Fernando Terán Camacho Director, Instituto del Cáncer Sociedad de Lucha contra el Cáncer (SOLCA) Núcleo de Quito Rafael Almeida No. 325 Quito

GUATEMALA

Dr. Oswaldo Chinchilla Aguilar Director General de Salud Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social 9a. Avenida 14-65, Zona l Guatemala

Dr. César Enrique Monroy Maldonado Director Ejecutivo Hospital General San Juan de Dios 11 Avenida A 11-46, Zona 2 Guatemala

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Carlos Lizama Rubio Cirujano Jefe, Instituto de Cancerología Liga contra el cáncer Guatemala

HONDURAS

Dr. Manuel Sandoval Encargado Programa Nacional Control del Cáncer División de Epidemiología Ministerio de Salud Pública Tegucigalpa

Dr. Ricardo Bulnes Molina Jefe, Depto. de Oncología, Hospital General San Felipe Ministerio de Salud Pública Tegucigalpa

Dr. Rolando Calderón Salinas Director Centro Salud "Dr. M. Paz Barahona" San Pedro Sula

JAMAICA

Dr. Alma Dyer Principal Medical Officer (Epidemiology) Ministry of Health 10 Caledonia Avenue Kingston 5

Dr. Vernon Spence Senior Radiation Oncologist Kingston Public Hospital Kingston

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. J. St. Elmo Hall Senior Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynecology University Hospital of the West Indies Kingston

The Jamaica Cancer Society 16 Lady Musgrove Road Kingston

MEXICO

Dra. Julieta Calderón de Laguna Jefe de la Oficina Normativa de Oncología Centro Hospitalario 20 de Noviembre ISSSTE México, D.F., México

Dr. Francisco Tenorio González Jefe, Servicio de Ginecología Oncológica Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social México 18, D.F.

Agransuro 208, 701 México 18, D.F.

Dr. Rodolfo Díaz-Perchés Director, Centro Regional Secundario de Calibración y Dosimetría de S.S.R. Hospital General Dr. Balmis No. 143 México, D.F.

PANAMA

Dr. María Luisa García de Aybar Jefa, Programa Maternal, Depto. Maternoinfantil Ministerio de Salud 6-1989 El Dorado Panamá

Dr. Rosa Crespo de Britton Directora Instituto Oncológico Nacional Apartado 6-108, El Dorado Panamá

PERU

Dr. Eliseo A. Barron Hidalgo Director General de Salud de la Región XVII - Callao Ministerio de Salud Jr. Colina No. 789 Bellavista, Callao (Tel:29-0578)

Los Cisnes 260 - San Isidro Lima

Dr. Felipe Romero Oliva
Jefe, Depto. de Ginecología
y Obstetricia
Hospital General San Juan de Dios
Av. Guardia Chalaca No. 1860
Bellavista, Callao (Tel: 29-9784)
Lima

Cabo Blanco 160, Orrantia del Mar San Isidro Lima

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Frieda Heller Presidenta, Fundación Peruana del Cáncer Jr. Carabaya No. 831, Of. 309 (Tel: 27-4783) Lima

Casilla 4408 Lima 100

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Dr. Stanley S. Lutchman Principal Medical Officer Ministry of Health and Environment 9 Grenada Aven, Federation Pk, POS Port of Spain

35 Sackville Street Port of Spain

Dr. Jean Wong Hospital Medical Director Port of Spain General Hospital Port of Spain

20 Ellerslie Park Haraval, Trinidad

CANCER LEAGUE

Mrs. Patricia E. Clarke Education Officer Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Society 157A Western Main Rd. St. James

URUGUAY

Dr. Armando López Scavino Viceministro de Salud Pública Ministerio de Salud Pública Av. Agraciada 3355 Montevideo

Dr. Eduardo Lasalvia Prisco Director, Instituto de Oncología Director de la Cátedra de Medicina Montevideo

Duvimioso Terra 1623 Montevideo

Dr. Américo Stabile Sanguinetti Subdirector Hospital Pereira Rossell Ministerio de Salud Pública Montevideo

Soriano 1335 Montevideo

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Tabare Carlevaro Elizondo Médico-Jefe, Servicio Oncología Médica Instituto de Oncología Ministerio de Salud Pública Calle Luis de la Torre 427 Montevideo

Arismendi 1430 Uruguay

VENEZUELA

Dr. Aquiles Erminy Russián Director, Oncología Ministerio de Sanidad y Asistencia Social Caracas

Quinta Aliesgra, Calle Tamanaco San Bernardino Caracas

Dr. Imelda Lucena Sierralta Médico-Director Instituto Oncológico Luis Razetti Ministerio de Sanidad y Asistencia Social Caracas

1021 Calle Sanabria Quinta San Martín El Paraiso, Caracas

CANCER LEAGUE

Dr. Rubén Merenfeld Presidente, Sociedad Anticancerosa Canónigos a Esperanza 43 Caracas

TEMPORARY ADVISERS

Dr. David A. Boyes
Director, Cancer Control Agency
of British Columbia
700-686 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V5Z 1G1

Dr. Alan Robert (Robin) Hutchinson Director, Vancouver U.B.C. Area Ministry of Health Prov. of British Columbia 1515 Blanchard Street Victoria, B.C. V8W 3C8 Canada

Mrs. Phyllis H. Hood Executive Director Canadian Cancer Society 955 West Broadway Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 3X8 Canada

3254 E 7th Avenue Vancouver, B.C. Canada

Dr. Nubia Aristizábal Profesora Universidad del Valle, Depto. de Patología Apartado Aéreo 2188 Cali, Colombia

Dr. Rodrigo Prado
Servicio de Citopatología y
Control de Cáncer
Universidad de Chile
Casilla 6606, Correo 7
Santiago, Chile

Dr. Luis Rodolfo Lorenzana Fernández Hospital Herrera Llerandi 6a. Av. 7-55, Zona 10 Guatemala

Dr. William E. Reeves Chief, Epidemiology Department Gorgas Memorial Laboratory APO Miami, 34002 Miami, FLA

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

Saul B. Gusberg, M.D.
Professor of Gynecology
Consultant, American Cancer Society, Inc.
777 - 3rd Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

Mrs. Gerry Ann de Harven Vice President, International Activities American Cancer Society, Inc. 777 - 3rd Avenue New York, N.Y. 10017

OBSERVERS

CHILE

Col. Mr. Víctor Manuel Molina Moscoso Presidente Ejecutivo Corporación Nacional Cáncer Santos Dumontt 999 Santiago

Mrs. Norma Elisa Augier de Molina Directora de Relaciones Públicas Corporación Nacional de Cáncer Santos Dumontt 999 Santiago

Mrs. Sylvia Patricia Retamal de Claude Directora Hogar Lucía Hiriart de Pinochet para Enfermos en Tránsito Corporación Nacional del Cáncer Santos Dumont 999 Santiago

ICELAND

Dr. Gunnlaugur Geirsson Head, Cytolaboratories Icelandic Cancer Society Reykjavik

P. O. Box 236 Kópavogur, Iceland

MEXICO

Dr. Carlos McGregor Subdirector General Médico del IMSS y Ginecólogo México, D.F.

Mrs. María Teresa Cisneros de Cárdenas Coordinadora, Detección del Cáncer de la SSA México, D.F.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Dr. Pablo Isaza PAHO/WHO Representative in México Mexico, D.F.

Dr. Jorge Litvak Coordinator, Adult Health Program

Dr. L. Dobrossy Cancer EURO Copenhagen, Denmark

Lic. Tracy Enright
Women in Health and Development
 Program (WHD)

Dr. Mervyn U. Henry Caribbean Program Coordinator Bridgetown, Barbados

Dr. Helena E. Restrepo Regional Adviser in Chronic Diseases

Dr. K. E. Stanley Cancer Unit Geneva, Switzerland

Dr. Néstor Suárez Ojeda Maternal-and-Child Health, HPM

CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL MEETING

México, D.F.: 17-20 June 1984

Agenda

Monday, enero 16			
14:00 - 17:00	Registration		
Tuesday, January 17			
8:00 - 9:00	Registration		
9:00 - 10:00	Opening	Dr. G. Soberón A. Dr. J. C. de Laguna Dr. P. Isaza	
	Objetives of the Meeting	Dr. J, Litvak	
10:00 - 10:30	Carcinoma of the Cervix as a Public Health Problem in Latin America	Dr. W. C. Reeves	
10:30 - 11:00	BREAK		
11:00 - 11:30	Cervical Cancer in Screened vs. Unscreened Populations	Dr. D. A. Boyes	
11:30 - 12:00	Cost-effectiveness and Political Aspects of Screening	Dr. R. Hutchinson	
12:00 - 14:00	LUNCH .		
14:00 - 15:30	Panel 1. Registration Strategies		
	Chairman: Dr. W. C. Reeves Participants: Dr. Rodrigo Prado Dr. Nubia Aristizábal Dr. Zoilo Marinello	(Panamá) (Chile) (Colombia) (Cuba)	
15:30 - 15:45	BREAK		

15:45 - 17:45 Group Discussions on Subject Panel 1

Wednesday, January 18

8:30 - 10:00 Panel 2. Role of the Leagues Against Cancer in Public and Professional Education.

Chairman: Ms. Gerry Ann de Harven (American Cancer Society)
Participants: Mrs. Phillys Hood (Canadian Cancer Society)
Mrs. Virginia de Mekbel (Costa Rica)
Dr. Fernando Terán Camacho (Ecuador)
Dr. Teresa Consolaro de Simonetti (Chile)

10:00 - 10:15 BREAK

10:15 - 12:30 Group Discussions on Subject Panel 2

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH

14:00 - 15:30 Panel 3. Laboratory Organization

Chairman: Dr. J. Laguna (Mexico)
Participants: Dr. M. Pontes Cunha (Brazil)
Dr. R. Lorenzana (Guatemala)
Dr. R. Prado (Chile)

15:30 - 15:45 BREAK

15:45 - 17:45 Group Discussions on Subject Panel 3

Thursday, January 19

8:30 - 10:00 Panel 4. Diagnosis and Treatment

Chairman: Dr. S. B. Gusberg (U.S.A.)
Participants: Dr. R. Britton (Panamá)
Dr. F. Tenorio (México)
Dr. R. Diaz-Perches (México)

10:00 - 10:15 BREAK

10:15 - 12:30 Group Discussions on Subject Panel 4

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH

14:00 - 15:30 Panel 5. Administrative Structure of Screening Programs

Chairman: Dr. D. A. Boyes (Canada)
Participants: Dr. R. Hutchinson (Canada)
Dr. J. St. Elmo Hall (Jamaica)
Dr. M. L. G. de Aybar (Panama)
Dr. Edmur F. Pastorello (Brazil)

15:30 - 15:45 BREAK

15:45 - 17:45 Group Discussions on Subject Panel 5

Friday, January 20

8:30 - 10:00 Plenary Session

Summary and Conclusions

10:00 - 10:15 BREAK

10:15 - 12:30 Visit to Screening Program in Mexico City.