

Foreword

The ALCUE HEALTH Project is an initiative for collaboration between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union, with the aim of undertaking a series of health-related and quality-of-life activities. Its objectives are to strengthen the capacity for cooperation and develop a critical mass of knowledge within this network in relation to priority public health issues, by means of investigation projects, training programs and workshops, with experts from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and from Europe, with a view of transforming the knowledge generated into public health policies and practices.

This first workshop, on “Epidemiological and Social Determinants of Chagas Disease”, had the objective of assessing the present situation regarding this disease and the initiatives undertaken for controlling it in the Southern Cone of South America, the Andean Countries, the Amazon Region, Central America, and Mexico. The aim was to obtain basic information for formulating surveillance and control policies, as a model for emerging, reemerging, and neglected infectious diseases.

The workshop discussed the consequences of Chagas disease in non-endemic countries in the light of international migrations, access to diagnosis and treatment for this disease in endemic and non-endemic countries, and a strategic plan for diseases that are not dealt with, in neglected populations. Chagas disease was chosen as a model for this seminar because it is a neglected disease that affects socially excluded groups in 21 countries of Latin America and presents high morbidity and mortality, with intrinsic and extrinsic factors that are related to the poverty cycle, the ecology of its vectors and hosts, and human activities. All of these factors make its control difficult.

Twenty-two experts took part in the workshop, coming from 15 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, United States, Switzerland, Uruguay, and Venezuela, and also representatives from the Pan-American Health Organization, World Health Organization, and Non-Governmental Organizations. Talks were presented and group discussions were held at the event, which took place in Rio de Janeiro from February 20 to 23, 2006.

The present supplement of *Memórias do Instituto Oswaldo Cruz* includes information and conclusions from the talks, group discussions, and recommendations of the workshop participants, revisiting the following initiatives still at work:

- Southern Cone Initiative (SCI) to eliminate *Triatoma infestans* and to interrupt transfusional transmission of tripanosomiasis Americana.
- Central American Countries Initiative (IPCA) to interrupt vectorial and transfusional transmission of Chagas disease.
- Andean Countries Initiative (ACI) to control vectorial and transfusional transmission of Chagas disease.
- Intergovernmental Initiative for the surveillance and prevention of Chagas disease in the Amazons (AMCHA).
- Control, prevention and surveillance of Chagas disease in Mexico.

We consider that this workshop was one of the most successful among those we have had the opportunity to take part in, and for this reason we wish to thank the participants in this activity for their efforts.

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