

COMMISSION ON LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS



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Aims

1. To provide and promote epilepsy education and research with excellence, quality, efficiency and humanistic approach for medical and non-medical professionals in Latin America
2. To coordinate academic activities among the ILAE Latin America Region chapters
3. To improve the health care of people with epilepsy in Latin America

Task Forces and Activities

1. PAHO Strategy and Plan of Action on Epilepsy: Carlos Acevedo (IBE), Marco T. Medina (ILAE), and Devora Kestel (PAHO).
2. 8th Latin-American Congress was held in Buenos Aires, September 17 - 20, 2014: Roberto Caraballo, Silvia Kochen, Lilia Nuñez, Sam Wiebe, Marco T. Medina and Patricio Abad.
Preparation of the 9th Latin American Congress to be held in Cancun Mexico, August 20th to 23rd, 2016: Gerardo Quiñonez, Tomas Mesa and Marco T. Medina.
3. ALADE: Alejandro Scaramelli, Elza Marcia Yacubian and Patricio Abad
4. LASSE: Esper Cavalheiro
5. ILAE website: Franz Chaves-Sell
6. Health Primary Care: Lilia Morales
7. Epilepsy Surgery: Mario Alonso and Manuel Campos
8. Ketogenic Diet Project: Roberto Caraballo, Laura Guilhoto, Eduardo Barragan, Alejandro Scaramelli and Patricio Abad
9. ILAE North American Commission collaboration

- 1) **Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) Strategy and Plan of Action on Epilepsy**
On September 20, 2014 at the 8th Latin-

American Congress in Buenos Aires a PAHO, IBE and ILAE meeting on the PAHO Strategy and Plan of Action on Epilepsy was held with the new chief of the PAHO Mental Health and Substance Use Unit, Devora Kestel. During this meeting a report of activities was made as well as long term planning. Dr. Jorge Rodriguez is retired from PAHO but he will keep working on this project as an advisor.

From June 2014 to June 2015 we have been working on the following activities:

- a) Strategy and plan of action on epilepsy in Bolivia 2015: A pilot project
Chairs: Mario Camargo, Franz Chaves Sell, Roberto Caraballo, Alejandro Scaramelli, Carlos Acevedo, Tomas Mesa and Marco T. Medina.

The epilepsy week in Bolivia was held from 13 to 17 June 2015 in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The main goals of this pilot project were:

1. Educate epilepsy patients, their families and the general population in order to raise public awareness. 2. Reduce the stigma, discrimination and social exclusion surrounding patients with epilepsy. 3. Train employees of the primary healthcare institutions in order to improve their skills to diagnose and treat epilepsy patients. 4. Establish a neurologic and mental health network in the secondary and tertiary level of health care to appropriately manage patients with epilepsy. **Activities:** 1. Educational course directed to the relatives of epilepsy patients, primary school teachers and general population (Attendance: 400 participants).
2. An advertising campaign was held during the "epilepsy week in Bolivia" with press conferences, media tours and participation of local authorities. Information on "Epilepsy week in Bolivia" appeared in the most important newspapers, TV news and radio frequencies throughout the country. Authorities from SEDES (State Government Health Service) were actively part of this campaign. 3. Educational course provided to primary care physicians aiming to improve their skills diagnosing and treating patients with epilepsy. (Attendance:

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100 primary care physicians). 4. Neurologists, child neurologists and EEG technicians were trained in order to achieve standardization of care and to encourage the establishment of Epilepsy Centers throughout the country. (Attendance: 50 neurologists and child neurologists; 25 EEG technicians). 5 Massive distribution of educational material throughout the city.

- b) A Report on Epilepsy in Latin America and the Caribbean was published in 2013. This report was prepared with the collaboration of ILAE and IBE. Information from 25 of 33 countries (70%) that responded to the survey on plans, services and resources.
- c) Several Latin American and Caribbean countries are implementing the mhGAP-IG (mental health treatment gap program) as an important component in the process of integrating mental health and neurological disorders into primary health care. Epilepsy is one of the modules being implemented.
- d) A pilot program on Primary Health Care is going on in Bolivia.

2) 8th Latin American Congress on Epilepsy (LACE) Buenos Aires, September 17th to 20th, 2014

Chairs: Roberto Caraballo, Silvia Kochen, Lilia Nuñez, Samuel Wiebe, Marco T. Medina and Patricio Abad

The Congress was attended by 756 delegates from 40 countries. The program covered a broad range of topics selected from recommendations across the region and featured eminent speakers from the region and around the world. A total of 182 abstracts were submitted from centers across America. The subjects ranged from cutting-edge basic science to critical community and epidemiological work. These abstracts were published in English and Spanish in the supplement of *Epileptic Disorders*.

The opening ceremony was framed by talks of Buenos Aires culture and diversity. Welcome words were from Dr. Roberto Caraballo, director of the Congress, and Dr. Silvia Kochen, local president of IBE, followed by the chair of the Latin-American chapter of the ILAE Dr. Marco Tulio Medina, and the chair of the Latin-American IBE, Dr. Lilia Nuñez Orozco, and finally, the president of the ILAE, Emilio



Perucca, and IBE president Athanasios Covanis. A children's symphonic orchestra played at the closing ceremony.

Didactic lectures were held each day, underlining the educational mission component, and three excellent symposia on vagus nerve stimulation, advances in juvenile myoclonic epilepsy, and rational polytherapy took place.

A very interesting ALADE course on epilepsy pharmacotherapy, epileptic syndromes, type of seizures, and electroencephalography was also organized with full attendance the day before starting the congress. Other topics, such as discrimination, disability and epilepsy as well as national and Latin-American employment perspectives were also included.

Main sessions ranged from epilepsy in children, epileptic encephalopathy, non-convulsive status epilepticus, and genetics to epidemiological, psychiatric, and neuropsychological aspects as well as epilepsy translational research. The parallel sessions covered anticonvulsant cost, side effects, and generics, epilepsy surgery in children and adults in America, the ketogenic diet, PAHO strategy and plan of action in epilepsy, Castells and Mendilaharsu symposium and epilepsy in the tropics, among others.

Platform sessions were of good quality and many countries were represented. The posters filled the exhibition rooms to capacity and a wide range of topics were on display, showing quality research in each of the fields.

Topics ranged from anticonvulsants to stigma at work and school, and epilepsy and daily activities as well as epilepsy and women were

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also considered. Fun was also to be had, with Tango dancing. There were many opportunities for discussion and networking.

The Chapter Convention was well attended by member chapters as well as candidate chapters. Many business meetings were held, notably that of the Commission of Latin American Affairs.

Preparation of the 9th Latin American Congress to be held in Cancun Mexico, August 20 to 23, 2016 is in process. Gerardo Quiñonez, Tomas Mesa and Marco T. Medina are the co-chairs.

3) ALADE (Latin America Academy of Epilepsy) Report

Alejandro Scaramelli (Chair), Ellza Marcia Yacubian (Past Chair) and Patricio Abad (Secretary)

In April 2015 the ILAE Commission on Latin American Affairs (CLAA) elected the members of the Latin American Academy of Epilepsy (ALADE) for the 2015-2019 term. This election process was supported by the ILAE.

The CLAA elected Alejandro Scaramelli as the ALADE Chair and Patricio Abad as the ALADE Secretary. The full list of elected members are:

1. Patricio Abad (Ecuador)
2. Roberto Caraballo (Argentina)
3. Jaime Carrizosa (Colombia)
4. Guilca Contreras (Venezuela)
5. Li Li Min (Brazil)
6. Loreto Rios (Chile)
7. Alejandro Scaramelli (Uruguay)
8. Elza Marcia Yacubian (Brazil)
9. Alicia Bogacz (Uruguay/ ex-officio member from IBE)

During this period, the following activities were carried out:

1. ALADE Courses during the LA Epilepsy Congress, Buenos Aires, 17 to 19 September, 2014, Hotel Hilton, Buenos Aires, Argentina: EEG of the epilepsies; semiology of epileptic seizures and epilepsy pharmacotherapy.
2. In May 2015, the process for assigning the ALADE fellowships began. These fellowships

consist of a support of US 12,000 each for 3 neurologists or child neurologists, or neurosurgeons from Latin America selected from a list of applicants who wish to study in recognized epilepsy centers of the region for one year. This process began with the identification of such centers willing to receive fellows. Once confirmed, and in order to publicize the program widely, ALADE made the call for 2015 Fellowships through the ILAE web and via all LA chapters. In 2015 we had 13 candidates. The applications were evaluated according to a set of pre-established selection criteria. There was funding for a total of 3 fellows, but a fourth one wished to make use of the opportunity and was able to find funding elsewhere. This year's fellows were:

- a) Dr. Eva López (Venezuela) accepted at the F.I.R.E. Center, Cartagena, Colombia. She completed her general neurology training at Ciudad Hospitalaria "Dr. Enrique Tejeras," Valencia, Venezuela.
- b) Dr. Liza Núñez (Perú) accepted at the Clínica Las Condes, Santiago, Chile. She is an adult neurologist at the department of epilepsy, Instituto de Ciencias Neurológicas, Lima, Perú.
- c) Dr. Martha Ríos (Cuba) accepted at the Clínicas, Riberão Preto Hospital, Brazil. She is a child neurosurgeon who studied at "Juan Manuel Márquez" Hospital, La Havana, Cuba
- d) Dr. Vanessa Benjumea (Colombia), accepted at Ramos Mejía Hospital, Buenos Aires, Argentina. She completed her neurology residence at CES University, Medellín, Colombia.

4) Latin American Summer School on Epilepsy (LASSE)

Esper Cavalheiro (Chair)

The 9th. Latin American Summer School on Epilepsy (LASSE IX) was held in São Paulo, Brazil, between 22 February and 3 March 2015. From the 183 applications, we selected 60 professionals and/or graduate students from Latin America. The central theme, "Epilepsy: Comorbidities and Complications," was approached by the most important experts

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in the field allowing an updating on the general aspects of the main comorbidities and complications, whether psychiatric, physical or social, that could impact the life of PWE in different periods of their lives. During the school, students were asked to prepare-in groups and under tutoring-research projects related to the central theme which were presented on the last day of LASSE.

The dedication and enthusiasm in the preparation of these projects were amazing.

Research projects presented by the students:

1. Does cannabidiol restore memory loss and decrease the number of seizures in PWE?
2. Evaluation of the number of seizures and cognitive performance in patients with epilepsy undergoing a second hippocampectomy or deep brain stimulation.
3. Effect of adaptive neuroplasticity on memory in patients with absence seizures.
4. Epilepsy and sexual dysfunction.
5. Prevalence of the most frequent comorbidities in PWE living in South America.
6. Studies of pro-inflammatory cytokines in patients with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy with major depression.
7. Is omega-3 effective in the prevention of depression associated with epilepsy? Insights from an experimental model.
8. CPAP anti-inflammatory effect in epilepsy resistant to drug treatment.

The discussions that took place after the presentation of each project were very rich. All students would discuss, give suggestions, and point out alternative solutions. Discussions with teachers were very exciting and high level.

5) ILAE en Español and Portuguese websites

Franz Chaves-Sell (Chair)

ILAE en Español: (http://www.ilae.org/Visitors/Centre/Trans_Spanish.cfm) and Portuguese: (http://www.ilae.org/Visitors/Centre/Trans_Portuguese.cfm) websites are very active. The ILAE en Español has 12 ILAE chapters' websites, 11 from Latin America. We have included important information on epilepsy classification, ketogenic diet, genetics, PAHO videos, reports, books, etc.

6) Health Primary Care

Lilia Morales-Chacon (Chair).

A health primary care project in Bolivia was established. A regional program with the PAHO support is in process

7) Epilepsy Surgery

Mario Alonso (Chair) and Manuel Campos Support for the development of the Epilepsy Surgery programs in Lima, Peru and Guayaquil, Ecuador. Participation of Epilepsy Surgery Centers in Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Costa Rica.

The first epilepsy surgery program was established in Santa Cruz with the support of Manuel Campos and Mario Camargo.

8) Ketogenic Diet Project

Roberto Caraballo, Laura Guilhoto, Eduardo Barragan, Alejandro Scaramelli and Patricio Abad are working on regional guidelines.

9) ILAE North American Commission collaboration and the Partnering Epilepsy Centers in the Americas (PECA) program.

PECA aims specifically to support and expand exchange programs between the members of the Latin American Commission, the North American Commission and the Caribbean chapters of the ILAE, in order to significantly impact epilepsy care in these regions. The American Epilepsy Society has a "Spanish Symposium" each year at the AES Congress.

Submitted by

Marco T. Medina and Franz Chaves-Sell