

History of the Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas: Articulating efforts to improve pharmaceutical practice and education in the region of the Americas

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Introduction

The Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas (FFA) was founded on 29 November 1999, in Santiago, Chile, by the Pan American Health Organization/Regional Office of the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), 3 regional and 14 national pharmaceutical organizations in the Americas region. Two well-marked periods can be distinguished in its organisation and operation, which are governed by a two statutes. The first cycle runs from 1999 to 2009 and the second runs from 2010 to 2024. The main differences between these two stages are marked by the contents of its statutes, the integration and form of election of its executive committee, the headquarters of the technical secretariat, as well as the variety and intensity of the activities carried out in each of them.

Background and foundation

The FFA was established using as a model a similar initiative, the European Pharmaceutical Forum (FFE) established in 1992, in cooperation with the pharmaceutical associations of Europe and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The concept of replicating the FFE in the Americas was initially agreed upon at a meeting of the board of directors of the Pan American Pharmacy Federation (FEPAFAR) held in Costa Rica, on 30 June 1999, with the former president of the FFE, Joep Winters, who served as technical advisor. This decision was reflected in the San José Declaration issued as the culmination of the event.

The preparation of the first statutes was the charge of: Rosario D'Alessio, member of the PAHO/WHO Essential Medicines staff, George Griffenhagen, representative of the American Pharmacists Association on the board of directors of FEPAFAR, and Rodrigo Salas Sánchez, president of the FEPAFAR.

After adopting the statutes and financial structure for the new organisation, the members of its executive committee were elected, who served provisionally until the first annual plenary session held on 20 October 2000, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Constituent organisations

The founding organisations of the FFA are:

- Pan American Health Organization
- International Pharmaceutical Federation

- Pan American Federation of Pharmacy
- Central American and Caribbean Pharmaceutical Federation
- South American Pharmaceutical Federation
- Argentine Pharmaceutical Confederation
- College of Biochemistry and Pharmacy of Bolivia
- Conselho Federal de Farmácia of Brazil
- College of Pharmaceutical Chemists and Biochemists of Chile
- College National Association of Pharmaceutical Chemists of Colombia
- College of Pharmacists of Costa Rica
- Dominican Pharmaceutical Association
- American Pharmacists Association
- College of Pharmacists and Chemists of Guatemala
- College of Chemist-Pharmacists of Honduras
- Association of Pharmaceutical Chemists of Paraguay
- College of Pharmaceutical Chemists of Peru
- Association of Chemistry and Pharmacy of Uruguay
- Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation

Objectives

The two statutes that have governed the FFA established that its purpose is to promote and support dialogue and cooperation among pharmaceutical organisations through:

1. Improving health in the Americas through development and improvement of the professional practice of pharmacy and pharmaceutical education.
2. Promotion of the execution of projects related to the professional practice of pharmacy and pharmaceutical education by pharmaceutical organisations in the Americas.
3. Integration of appropriate FIP and PAHO/WHO policies regarding the pharmaceutical profession and undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education programmes.
4. Preparation and dissemination of declarations and technical documents that support the policies defined by international and regional pharmaceutical organisations.

All activities, documents and manifestations of the forum must be framed in the principles, policies and declarations of the FIP and PAHO/WHO.

Statutes

The FFA had two statutes in its first 20 years of existence:

The first, approved on 29 November 1999, came into force in 2000. Modifications were introduced in 2001 and 2003 and was in force until 2009.

The second statute, approved in 2009, came into force in 2010. Modifications were introduced in 2013.

Organisation

The FFA contemplates the integration of national members and observer members since the 1999 statute. With the 2010 statute, a new category of member was introduced: the associate. In 2019, the FFA was made up of the following national pharmaceutical organisations as members:

- Argentine Pharmaceutical Confederation
- Federal Council of Pharmacy of Brazil
- National College of Pharmaceutical Chemists of Colombia
- College of Pharmacists of Costa Rica

- College of Chemists, Biochemists and Pharmacists of Pichincha (Ecuador)
- Association of Pharmaceutical Chemists of Paraguay
- Association of Chemistry and Pharmacy of Uruguay
- American Pharmacists Association
- American Society of Health Pharmacists

At an Ordinary General Assembly held on 29 August, 2019, two more organisations joined as national members:

- Bolivian Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- National College of Pharmacists of Panama.

Observer organisations

- Pan American Health Organization/Regional Office of the World Health Organization.
- International Pharmaceutical Federation.
- Pan American Federation of Pharmacy.
- Central American and Caribbean Pharmaceutical Federation
- South American Pharmaceutical Federation
- General Council of Official Colleges of Pharmacists of Spain

Since its first statute, the FFA had the following bodies through which it exercises its functions:

- A general assembly

- An executive committee
- A technical secretariat

General assembly

In accordance with the 1999 statute, the annual plenary assembly was made up of the national and regional pharmaceutical organisations affiliated with the FFA. At each assembly, reports were received from the secretariat, the treasurer and the executive committee (EC), the dues to be paid by members were determined and other matters were addressed in accordance with their objectives. The members of the EC were elected every two years. The representatives of PAHO/WHO and the FIP participated as observers, as well as all those pharmaceutical organisations that had entered with that category.

When the second statute came into being, the general assembly was made up of member national pharmaceutical organisations that had the right to speak and vote as long as they were up to date with their financial obligations. General assemblies could be ordinary or extraordinary. An ordinary general assembly was held every year, with the agenda and its contents defined by the statute. As many extraordinary general meetings could be called as necessary. The modification of the statutes and the dissolution of the organisation had to be heard in an extraordinary general meeting and in both cases a qualified majority (two thirds of the members present with the right to vote) is required for its approval.

From 2000 to 2009, the general assemblies of the FFA were held within the framework of the congresses of the Pan American Federation of Pharmacy, from 2010 to 2018 with the congresses of the South American Pharmaceutical Federation and, from 2019, they were held in conjunction with an event organised or sponsored by a member, observer or associated national pharmaceutical organisation. In its first 20 years of operation, the FFA held 20 ordinary general assemblies and only in one of them was the necessary quorum not met to meet and make agreements (Ordinary General Assembly held on 28 August, 2006 in Salvador de Bahía, Brazil).

Executive committee

According to the 1999 statute, the EC was made up of 7 members: a president, three vice presidents, a treasurer and two directors, elected in such a way that they were geographically representative of the region of the Americas. All members of the EC were elected every two years, held their positions for 2 years and could be re-elected for a single additional period (maximum 4 years), except for the treasurer who could be voted for up to 3 periods (maximum 6 years).

As of the 2010 statute, the EC was made up of 5 members: a president, a vice president, a treasurer, a director of pharmacy practice and a director of pharmaceutical education, who hold office for two years, and may be re-elected by two more periods (maximum 6 years). The president and two

directors are elected alternately one year and the vice president and treasurer the following year. The functions of each member of the EC were stipulated in the statute.

In its first 23 years of uninterrupted operation, the FFA has had 5 presidents:

- Rodrigo Salas Sánchez (Costa Rica): 1999-2004
- Aquiles Arancibia Orrego (Chile): 2004-2010
- Juliano Da Rocha (Brazil): 2010
- Eduardo Savio Quevedo (Uruguay): 2011-2017 and 2019-2022
- Gustavo Dodera Martínez (Argentina): 2017-2019

Secretariat

According to the 1999 statute, the FFA secretariat and office were provided by PAHO/WHO and were located at headquarters central of this. PAHO/WHO appointed a professional secretary, who was responsible for providing technical and administrative support to the assembly and the EC, as well as implementing all the actions stipulated by these bodies. It also acted as a centre for information and dissemination of the forum's activities.

With the 2010 statute, the FFA secretariat and office were provided by one of its national member organisations for renewable 3-year terms. For its operation, the national pharmaceutical organisation that housed the technical secretariat received annual financial support from the FFA and FIP. The national pharmaceutical organisation is the one who appoints the professional secretary. The functions of the technical secretariat are defined in the statute and are of a technical-administrative nature.

Period	1999-2009	2010-2022	2014-2019
Campus	PAHO/WHO, Washington DC	College of Pharmacists of Costa Rica	Association of Chemistry and Pharmacy of Uruguay

Technical secretary	– Magaly Pedrique (Venezuela): 1999-2001 – Micheline Marie Meiners (Brazil): 2001-2002 – José Luis Castro (Argentina): 2002-2009	– Gustavo Sáenz García (Costa Rica): 2009-2012 – María Lorena Quirós Luque (Costa Rica): 2012-2014 – Yajaira Quesada Rojas (Costa Rica): 2019-2022	Carlos Lacava Fernández (Uruguay): 2014-2019
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Since 2010, the CE has submitted for approval to the general assembly, an action plan-budget for the corresponding period, which breaks down all the activities that the FFA is going to execute in the stipulated period.

Financing

Since its inception, the main source of financing for the FFA was the annual membership fees paid by its organisational members:

- From 2000 to 2009, by provisions of the 1999 statute, both national pharmaceutical organisations and regional pharmaceutical organisations and FIP paid an annual fee and PAHO/WHO assumed all the costs of the technical secretariat, including the professional secretary it designated.
- As of 2010, only national pharmaceutical organisations paid an annual fee and the technical secretariat, including the appointment of the technical secretary, was assumed by a national pharmaceutical organisation, which was exempt from paying the annual participation fee. As of 2015, FIP financially supported the administrative operation with the allocation of EUR 2,500.00 per year.

On a few occasions the FFA has received financing from companies or other organisations, which, on all occasions, was directed to the implementation of specific previously agreed projects.

Main activities

1999-2009

During this stage, the FFA's activities were focused on the management, implementation and support for the execution of projects related to pharmaceutical care and good pharmacy practices:

- Pharmaceutical care project for high blood pressure: Formulated by PAHO/WHO, whose pilot study was developed in Ouro Preto, Brazil, and implemented from 2004 to 2006 in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.
- Pharmaceutical care project for diabetes mellitus: Formulated by PAHO/WHO and implemented from 2005 to 2006.
- Good pharmacy practices project Uruguay: Implemented in 2005-2006 with the support of a scholarship awarded by the FIP.
- Paraguay-Uruguay joint good pharmacy practices project: Implemented in 2008-2009 with support from the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the American Society of Health Pharmacists (ASHP).

During this period, the Pan American Federation of Pharmacy, the Central American and Caribbean Pharmaceutical Federation and the South American Pharmaceutical Federation, with the initial support of FIP, the Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas, the Ibero-American Academy of Pharmacy, the General Council of Official Colleges of Spain and the Organization of Ibero-Latin American Pharmacists, jointly issued in 2008, the Declaration of the Americas, referring to the pharmaceutical profession and its impact on health systems.

2010-2019

In this period the FFA diversified the activities carried out, as broken down below:

- 1) On October 5, 2011, the General Assembly agrees to subscribe to the Montevideo Commitment, referring to the promotion of change in the pharmaceutical services in the Americas, from the new conceptual framework to reality, which established a new challenge for pharmaceutical practice in the American countries, which is the development of pharmaceutical services in primary health care.
- 2) Beginning in 2011, the FFA was designated to review applicants from the Americas region for travel scholarships awarded by the FIP Foundation for Education and Research for young pharmacists to attend the World Pharmacy Congress. and Pharmaceutical Sciences held every year. From 2012 to 2019, 16 pharmaceutical professionals recommended by the FFA have travelled.
- 3) From 2014 to 2017, the FIP Foundation for Education and Research put out to tender the availability of funds to support regional pharmaceutical forums in the execution of projects. The FFA participated in the three calls made and obtained financing for three projects, two of which were executed:
 - Project executed from 2015 to 2016: Virtual Course on Professional Pharmaceutical Services based on Primary Health Care.

- Project executed from 2016 to 2018: Infectious diseases transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, dengue, chikungunya and Zika: a challenge for health systems. Supporting pharmacists to contribute to improving public health in the population of the Americas.

4) Starting in 2016, the FFA allocated funds to support the execution of projects nominated by its member national pharmaceutical organizations, in accordance with the objectives included in the annual plan approved by the ordinary general assembly held each year, whose themes have been: pharmaceutical services in primary health care, good pharmacy practices, undergraduate and postgraduate training and continuing education of pharmaceutical professionals. From 2016 to 2019, the FFA has made 4 calls for competitive funds and has financially and technically supported the execution of 8 projects, 7 related to practice in pharmaceutical services and one with pharmaceutical education.

5) In this period, the FFA published the following technical documents:

- Final work on the integration of pharmaceutical services: IV virtual course on pharmaceutical services in primary health care for managers (October 2015).

- Final work on the integration of pharmaceutical services: V virtual course on pharmaceutical services in primary health care for managers (August 2016).

- Final work on the integration of pharmaceutical services: VI virtual course on pharmaceutical services based on primary health care for managers (May 2017).

- Final project execution report: Infectious diseases transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, dengue, chikungunya and Zika: a challenge for health systems. Supporting pharmacists to contribute to improving public health in the population of the Americas, in Spanish and English (March 2018).

- Technical document. The pharmacist in the prevention, detection and control of arboviruses from the pharmacy: dengue, Zika, chikungunya and yellow fever, in Spanish and English (July 2018).

6) Starting in 2018, the FFA implemented the development of virtual conferences using the GoToWebinar platform provided by FIP. This programme aimed to address priority issues related to pharmaceutical practice. As of 31 August 2019, 7 webinars have been broadcast where the following topics were discussed:

- Dengue vaccine, in Spanish and English (March 2018)

- Pharmacist participation in the detection, control and prevention of arboviruses, in Spanish and English (May-June 2018)

- Yellow fever. Actions of the pharmacist in its detection, prevention and control, in Spanish and English (August 2018)

- Pharmaceutical professional responsibility in the environmental impact of the final disposal of medicines, in Spanish (March 2019)
- Good medication storage practices, in Spanish (May 2019)
- Good medicine distribution practices, in Spanish (June 2019)
- Vaccination services for users and the population from the community pharmacy, in Spanish (August 2019)

Information and communication media

From 1999 to 2011, the main means of information and communication used by the FFA was the issuance of periodic bulletins containing news, which continue to this day.

Starting in 2014, a website was developed (www.forofarmacodeelasamericas.org) and a contact email was established: forofarmacodeelasamericas@gmail.com.

In 2016, a Facebook was created and in 2019 a YouTube channel was created.

Conclusions

Throughout its first two decades of operation, the FFA has worked together with national and regional pharmaceutical professional organisations, FIP and the Pan American Health Organization/Pan American Health Office on different aspects of practice, pharmaceutical services and education aimed at improving the health and quality of life of the citizens of the Americas.

References

Materials contributed by Mr Gonzalo Sousa Pinto, official of the International Pharmaceutical Federation.

Materials contributed by Dr Magaly Pedrique, technical secretary of the Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas, period 2000-2001.

Materials contributed by Dr Eduardo Savio, president of the Pharmaceutical Forum of the Americas, period 2011-2017.

Materials from personal archive, Dr. Nuria Montero Chinchilla.

Materials located on the FFA website.