



The Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies (PAFNS): A New Regional Organization



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ABSTRACT

The Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies (PAFNS) was created on 15 November 2011 during the 20th World Congress of Neurology in Marrakech by virtue of the “Declaration of Morocco” signed by the WFN Latin American delegates and ratified on 5 March 2012 by delegates attending the 13th Pan-American Congress of Neurology in La Paz, Bolivia. On 20 March 2013 delegates attending the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Neurology in San Diego, California, USA, gave formal approval to the PAFNS Constitution. The neurological societies from the following countries have approved and signed the constitution as founding members and active ordinary members: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The Ibero-American Stroke Society (SIECV), the Commission on Latin American Affairs of the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and the World Sleep Society have requested the status of Associate Members. The WFN and the American Academy of Neurology provided seed grants for the creation of the Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies. PAFNS represents a major step for the improvement of regional neurological care, education and research.

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1. Introduction

Fifty-three years ago, the first Pan-American Congress of Neurology organized by the World Federation of Neurology (WFN) met in October 1963 in Lima, Peru [1]. Since then, neurologists from Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean have attended every four years the regional Pan-American Congresses organized by the WFN. During that period of time, most of the educational and research activities for the region were promoted by the WFN [1–3]. However, the need for an official regional organization became notorious mainly due to the growth of clinical neurology in the American continent outside the United States and Canada, as well as the need for up-to-date neurological information provided in Spanish and Portuguese.

2. Process, mission, and vision

The particular educational needs of the region were clearly recognized by representatives of several Latin American countries. This led to the “Declaration of Morocco” signed by the WFN Latin American delegates on 15 November 2011 during the 20th World Congress of Neurology in Marrakech. The Declaration stated that a regional continental organization was needed, “TO COORDINATE AND SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF

THE MEMBER SOCIETIES TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT OF NEUROLOGICAL SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT, AS WELL AS TO OPTIMIZE NEUROLOGICAL CARE, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AND TO PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BRAIN HEALTH.” A commission formed by the representatives of Chile, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic implemented the bylaws required for the creation of the Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies (PAFNS).

On 5 March 2012 delegates attending the 13th Pan-American Congress of Neurology in La Paz, Bolivia, endorsed the above declaration [4]. On 20 March 2013 the PAFNS Constitution was formally approved by all Latin American delegates attending the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Neurology in San Diego, California, USA. The following countries approved and signed the Constitution as Founding Members and Active Ordinary Members: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The Ibero-American Stroke Society (SIECV), the Commission on Latin American Affairs of the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and the World Sleep Society and the World Sleep Society have requested the status of Associate Members.

The enthusiastic regional support from all the Latin American member societies of the WFN and the steady leadership of Prof. Gustavo C. Román, Chairman of the WFN Latin America initiative, Prof. Marco T.

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Medina, WFN Regional Director for Latin America [1,4] and the support of Dr. Briseida Feliciano, Dr. Ana Robles, Prof. Renato Verdugo among others were critical for the foundation of the PAFNS. Two presidents of the WFN provided strong patronage to the project: Prof. Vladimir Hachinski and Prof. Raad Shakir. Enthusiastic support for this initiative was received from Prof. Timothy Pedley, President of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), and Prof. Morris Freedman, Canadian Representative to the WFN.

On 5 November 2015 during the XII World Congress of Neurology in Santiago, Chile, the legal status of PAFNS as a non-profit organization under Chilean law was signed having as witnesses Prof. Raad Shakir, Prof. Marco T. Medina, Prof. Gustavo Roman, Prof. Renato Verdugo, Prof. Sergio Castillo as well as numerous Chilean and Latin American neurologists. Legal counsel for elaboration of the PAFNS bylaws and establishment of the non-for-profit tax status was made possible thanks to grants provided by the WFN and the AAN. During the upcoming Pan-American Congress of Neurology in Cancun, Mexico at the end of 2016 the Council of Delegates will elect the new Board of Directors of PAFNS.

The Pan-American Federation of Neurological Societies (PAFNS) will be the preeminent neurological association of the Americas working toward maximizing the neurological health of the people in all countries in the American continent through education and awareness of the importance of early care of the brain diseases and dissemination of advances in neuroscience and the goal of optimizing neurological patient care. The PAFNS' vision is to reach the highest level of neurological health in all the countries of the American continent.

3. Objectives and future activities

The main objectives of the PAFNS will be the following: 1) To stimulate and promote the formation and organization of National Societies of Neurology in the American continent, and to promote excellence and international collaboration. 2) To optimize the care of neurological patients in all regions of the Americas. 3) To promote interdisciplinary collaboration with all allied disciplines involved in Neurology, including other medical and health sciences specialties, as well as lay-persons organizations and support groups for patients with neurological disorders and their families. 4) To promote excellence in clinical research and in neuroepidemiology as sources of progress respectively in patient care and in the implementation of effective Public Health measures. 5) To encourage basic sciences research, particularly in fields that address problems of clinical importance involving the nervous system. 6) To become instrumental in being an element of change to improve the curriculum for the teaching of the neurosciences, adapting it to the local pathologies and ensuring the highest educational standards at all levels including elementary school, secondary school, technical and university teaching. 7) To serve as the consulting international entity on topics related to Neurology and the nervous system. 8) To strive for optimal moral and ethical professional behavior of all members of the affiliated

neurological societies and for compliance with the constitution and by-laws of the Federation. 9) To support and defend at national and international levels the professional practice of Neurology in the American continent and to strive for the continuing education of all the members of its member societies. 10) To collaborate on preventive programs to control and prevent neurological disorders at local, national and international levels. 11) To maintain and to improve the level of public information with respect to neurological diseases in the Americas at local, national and international levels. 12) To contribute to maintaining brain health and neurological health around the world.

In order to achieve the objectives and missions, the PAFNS will undertake and number of activities, including but not limited to: 1) To organize a Panamerican Congress of Neurology every two (2) years. We elected Mexico for the 2016 PAFNS Congress and Brazil for the 2018 Congress. 2) To organize national, regional and international symposia, congresses and workshops on topics of neurological interest addressing also neuroscience advances relevant to the clinical practice or neurology and allied specialties. 3) To organize neuroscience teaching courses at post-graduate level during the congresses and meetings mentioned above and during other similar venues. 4) To recommend basic programs for teaching, training and certification of the Neurology specialty. 5) To prepare and provide widespread diffusion and implementation of guidelines and protocols for the diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, preventive measures and social impact of the main neurological disorders in order to elevate the professional level and quality of neurologists. 6) To recommend before hospitals and health institutions the need to obtain the equipment and instruments necessary for the optimal practice of Neurology, particularly with regards to diagnostic neuroimaging and clinical neurophysiology. 7) To recommend before hospitals and health institutions the establishment and organization of clinical services that are deemed adequate for the optimal management of the neurological patient. 8) To stimulate the creation of scholarship funds for interchange of faculty, students and residents. 9) To promote the organization of international research projects leading to the creation of databases, multicenter studies and controlled clinical trials. 10) To promote the dissemination of scientific publications of the specialty by means of official organs of the Federation including scientific journals, bulletins, internet and social media outlets. The creation of the PAFNS represents a major step for the improvement of regional neurological care, education and research.

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