

PAHO



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

News release

Americas Health Corps - PAHO and the United States present plan to improve quality and availability of health workers in the region

SIDE EVENT

Monday 26 September 2022
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

74th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas
**30th Pan American
Sanitary Conference**

26-30 September 2022

CSP30

Joint Action to Strengthen the Health Workforce in the Region of the Americas: Americas Health Corps



Washington, DC, 26 September 2022 (PAHO) – Americas Health Corps (AHC), a new initiative to facilitate the training of 500,000 public health professionals over the next five years, was presented today at a side meeting of the 30th Pan American Sanitary Conference. AHC aims to address gaps in quality and competency in order to meet priority needs, particularly in primary health care.

The initiative was presented to ministers of health and other health leaders by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director, Carissa F. Etienne, and the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra.

Chronic underinvestment and the sustained fragmentation of health systems in the Americas have led to a deficit of between 600,000 and 2 million healthcare workers, an issue compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Without a health workforce that is adaptable, trained and fit for purpose, the Region of the Americas will remain highly vulnerable to the impact of public health emergencies,” Dr. Etienne said.

Americas Health Corps aims to address this challenge by increasing the availability of well-trained and qualified health workers; building future leadership in health governance and public administration; and by ensuring private sector engagement in supporting the development of health workers.

It will also make use of PAHO’s Virtual Campus to expand digital learning for public health in the Americas and support the creation of a consortium of academic centers in public health.

Americas Health Corps will constitute “a strong and capable health workforce that is familiar with the entire region and can be deployed to countries in times of crisis without encountering the bureaucratic and administrative hurdles that slowed down the response when we saw COVID-19,” Xavier Becerra said.

The initiative will also facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas, which was adopted at the IX Summit of the Americas in June 2022. This plan aims to expand equitable access to quality health services; strengthen training and education; increase public financing for health; improve emergency preparedness and accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thanking healthcare workers for their “unwavering resilience” during the pandemic, the PAHO Director highlighted that countries in the region saved lives by moving health care workers to where they were most needed, expanding the delivery of telemedicine services, and increasing hospital capacity three-fold in some cases.

Selected quotes from the panel discussion on Americas Health Corps:

Ximena Aguilera, Minister of Health of Chile

“I would like to thank and congratulate you for this initiative, which is very important, and to highlight not only the heroic role of health care workers, but also that of health leadership, epidemiologists, laboratory workers and those working at the first level of care, who are the ones that have had to redouble their detection and response capabilities because every epidemic starts at the local level.

We support this initiative and would like to participate”

Francisco Jose Coma Martin, Minister of Public Health and Social Welfare of Guatemala

“We have learned that human resources, including those interested in working in remote communities, is crucial to tackling health problems. Guatemala, in the process of implementing a comprehensive health system, has made great efforts to find health workers who can reach remote communities and for this reason, I reiterate my appreciation for this Americas Health Corps.”

Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness of Jamaica

“Jamaica has traditionally been a supply market for health care workers. Over the past four years, over 3,000 health care workers, primarily nurses, migrated to the US and to Canada and the UK. This has resulted in a backlog in cases - surgery cases because we don't have operating theatre nurses, and challenges in terms of treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer.

We would like to train more but we are limited by faculty and clinical rotation space. And therefore, this collaboration to expand capacity

through partnerships is so necessary – not just for Jamaica but for other small countries in the Caribbean region.”

Links

[Joint Action to Strengthen the Health Workforce in the Region of the Americas](#)

[500,000 health workers to receive training under new joint initiative from PAHO and the United States](#)

[30th Pan American Sanitary Conference - Photo Album](#)

MEDIA CONTACTS

Luciana Viegas: + 1 202 981-8455

Ashley Baldwin: + 1 202 340-4025

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 316-5679

mediateam@paho.org

www.paho.org

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.