



# CARMEN School



## Introduction

In 2000, the 53<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly (WHA) approved the Resolution WHA53.17 that requested the WHO Director-General to develop a global strategy for the prevention and control of NCD. The WHA recognized “that the conditions in which people live and their lifestyle influence their health and quality of life and that NCD threaten the economies of Member States, leading to increasing health inequalities between countries and populations”. The strategy was developed and approved, and targets major NCD risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyle. It is based on principles of equity and social justice, focuses on multilevel policy-making, community development, health communication and sustainability of health systems. The WHO technical cooperation, based on the 2000 Global Strategy, has been delivered through the six regional networks that come together with multiple partners in the Global Forum on NCD Prevention and Control. The regional networks aim at establishing effective collaborative mechanisms and methodologies for integrated, intersectoral NCD prevention and control with a cross cutting health promotion approach.

Continuing the process and owing to the 2002 World Health Report on Risks to Health, the WHA requested the Director-General (Resolution WHA 55.23) to develop a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health within the framework of the renewed WHO strategy for NCD Prevention and Control. After extensive consultation, the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health is ready to be presented to the 2004 WHA. If the strategy is approved, it will be implemented through the Regional networks that conform the Global Forum for NCD Prevention and Control.

In 1996, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) developed an initiative aimed at giving technical cooperation to Member States for the implementation of effective integrated community-based NCD prevention programs, which is known by the Spanish acronym CARMEN\*. The CARMEN Initiative seeks to prevent major chronic non communicable diseases by reducing the prevalence of key risk factors among the population, through the implementation of integrated community-based interventions. Member States participating in the initiative conform the CARMEN Network, which is linked to the other WHO Regional Networks and to the Global Forum. In this way countries are accountable to each other for implementing integrated chronic disease prevention and health promotion programs. The CARMEN Network strives to promote collaboration to tackle the increasing burden of disease due to chronic non communicable diseases.

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\* CARMEN is the acronym for the name in Spanish, "Conjunto de Acciones para la Reducción Multifactorial de Enfermedades No transmisibles."

Although human resources are a crucial component of any public health system, the health workforce lacks the necessary skills and information to develop, implement and evaluate NCD prevention initiatives.<sup>1</sup> The Schools of Public Health are considered critical players in human resource development. Engaging them in capacity-building processes on health promotion and NCD prevention, as partners of the CARMEN Network, allows them to fully participate in NCD prevention and control initiatives in the Region. It is possible, by establishing this partnership, to build bridges between the academic sector, health services and community.

The CARMEN Network, aiming to contribute to the development of a public health workforce that is able to face the challenges posed by NCDs, has requested the development of the CARMEN School Project to PAHO. The *Evidence Based Public Health Course* was developed in 1997 by the Missouri Department Health Senior Services and the Saint Louis University School of Public Health. The course has been subsequently expanded and modified with the assistance of the CDC, Chronic Disease Directors, WHO, CINDI directors, and PAHO.

At the request of the 2003 General Assembly of the CARMEN Network, selected Schools of Public Health were decided to work in partnership with public health agencies, and health institutions/organizations in the development/updating of the following **training activities**:

- ➔ Evidence-Based Public Health and NCD Prevention
- ➔ Community health action for the prevention and control of NCDs
- ➔ Team building for the prevention of NCDs
- ➔ Management of NCD prevention and health promotion programs
- ➔ Behavioral Risk factor Surveillance (including use of data and information dissemination)

In this way, Carmen School is a special project of CARMEN network for series of training and public health activities that build a partnership between Schools of Public Health (SPH), Public Health Agencies and Ministries of Health (MOH) at the country level.

### Short-Term Objectives

- ➔ To develop, implement, and evaluate training courses on integrated NCD prevention for primary health care professionals, community workers and community leaders
- ➔ To establish a technical exchange program with prevention centers in the United States to support continuous improvement of the CARMEN School.
- ➔ To establish a small grant research program to support research on the effectiveness of health promotion programs for NCD prevention.

### Long-Term Objectives

- ➔ To develop the necessary competencies to enable public health workers and communities to confront the challenges of NCD prevention and health promotion initiatives.
- ➔ To strengthen the collaboration between Schools of Public Health and public health agencies in supporting of NCD prevention and control.

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<sup>1</sup> Pan American Health Organization. *CARMEN School Project Draft*. September 2004.

## Proposed Outcomes

- ➔ At least 60% of the CARMEN School trainers-of-trainers have participated in the implementation of a subsidiary school in their countries.
- ➔ At least 60% of the CARMEN School trainers-of-trainers are engaged in programs/projects related to prevention and control of NCDs.

## Partners

- The University of Saint Louis, School of Public Health in USA
- University of South Carolina, USA
- University of South Florida, USA
- The Pontific Catholic University (Chile)
- Catholic University of Concepcion (Chile)
- University of Pelotas (Brazil)
- The West Indies University, Department of Public Health (Jamaica)
- The University of San Carlos (Guatemala)
- University of South Florida branch in Panama City (Panama)

As of now, three courses as part of CARMEN school have been offered and evaluated through LAC. They are part of collaboration with the network of US Preventive Research Centers (PRCs), situated in 30 universities in the US.

1. Evidence Based Public Health Course (EBPH) was originated by the PRC at St. Louis University,
2. Physical Activity and Public Health (PAPH) was originated by the PRC at South Carolina University, and the
3. Social Marketing course (SM) was originated by the PRC at South Florida University.

## The Present and Future of the CARMEN School

At the last Biannual CARMEN Network Meeting in October 2005, the present standing and future development and dissemination of the CARMEN School project in the Americas was discussed. Presentations were given on the CARMEN School and on a proposed partnership between CARMEN and CDC in Atlanta.

### Pontificia Universidad Católica<sup>2</sup>

The Pontificia Universidad Católica (PUC) held an evidence-based public health course in 2004 in Santiago, Chile. Trainers from the University of St. Louis, a PAHO/WHO Collaborating center for evidence-based public health practice, collaborated with trainers from PUC and a local team of experts to run the course. The course was made up of 7 modules, each of which had its own objective and limitations. Some suggestions have come out of this pilot study:

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<sup>2</sup> Valdivia, Gonzalo. *Biannual Meeting of the CARMEN Network*. October 2005.

- ➔ To establish a preparatory module before the initiation of the first course module. This would evaluate capacities in aspects that fundamental to the course and would instruct participants in the conceptual bases of public health.
- ➔ To strengthen the availability of resources
- ➔ To homogenize the focus of the trainers.

The university has a proposal for a master's program in evidence-based public health that would address the aforementioned suggestions and would be strengthened in various ways in order to ensure that participants are able to successfully undertake all the tasks presented in the course.

### Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción<sup>3</sup>

The Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción in Chile offers a 10-module program that provides participants with the tools that allow them to apply their evidence-based knowledge to decision-making. The program is mainly intended for health professionals who are in leadership positions within their respective institutions. The purpose of the program is to stimulate the practice of evidence-based public health on the local and national level to contribute to the development of highly-trained professionals who respond to the current demands on the Chilean Health System.

### Uruguay<sup>4</sup>

Uruguay also organized a train-the-trainers course, with participation of Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, and in collaboration with PAHO, St. Louis University and with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of the Republic. The overall objective of the course was that the participants obtain the tools and support to be able to train health professionals in evidence-based public health, with goal of working on the prevention and control of NCDs on the operational level.

### CDC and PAHO Partnership<sup>5</sup>

In September 2005, CDC and PAHO entered into an agreement for “health promotion and noncommunicable disease and injury prevention initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean.” Researchers in these two institutions use comparable strategies to achieve goals in noncommunicable disease prevention, therefore the CARMEN School may be an ideal mechanism for developing a US-Latin American and Caribbean relationship for training and subsequent joint research in noncommunicable disease prevention.

The short term objective is to deliver and evaluate selected public health training. The mid term objective is to develop and implement multiple training courses that can foster a partnership for selected research in applied public health. The long term objective is to build an infrastructure in

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<sup>3</sup> Cortés, Marcela. *Biannual Meeting of the CARMEN Network*. October 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Vazquez, Rodolfo. *Biannual Meeting of the CARMEN Network*. October 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Gray, Barbara. *Biannual Meeting of the CARMEN Network*. October 2005.

the CARMEN countries to enable full cooperation with the Prevention Research Center on developing effective disease prevention strategies for widespread dissemination.

The CARMEN School and CDC would like to offer support for the evidence-based public health course in different settings and contract with the appropriate in-country organization to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. In addition, they would like to evaluate the course for physical activity and public health, which is modeled on a course developed by the Prevention Research Center at the University of South Carolina.

### Refinement of the CARMEN School Project

At the Biannual CARMEN Meeting in October 2005, several suggestions have been made by participants for the refinement of the CARMEN School Project:

- Higher emphasis should be based on the complex approach of chronic disease prevention and control, apart from teaching the necessary epidemiology. The CARMEN School intends to bridge the gap between the academic world and the practical world through offering courses on the real-life application of public health concepts, through taking advantage of the already existing resources, such as academic institutions in the countries.
- The CARMEN School courses overall may need to include and discuss health economics and the economic evaluation of public health needs more in depth.
- Brazil is already offering two special courses in NCD surveillance and evidence-based public health – has a proposal for a master's program in evidence-based public health, focusing on the quantification of problems, establishment of hierarchies, organization of information and quantitative evaluation.
- The Caribbean countries are setting up an evidence-based CARMEN School, by referring to the Jamaican model.

### Courses Already Offered by the CARMEN School

#### EBPH course

- One-week course in 2004 in Chile,
- One-year course in 2005 in Concepción , Chile, and
- Masters program (2006) in Concepción Chile.:
- One-week course (2005) in Uruguay, and
- One-year course (2006) in Brazil.
- One-week course in Jamaica (2007)
- One-week course in Guatemala (2007)

#### PAPH course

- One-week course in Costa Rica (2005)
- One-week course in Chile (2006)
- One-week course in Guatemala - in preparation (2007)

#### SM course

- 3 day course in Panama (2006)