

## Message from the Director



2002 EDITION



# Health in the Americas

**O**n this centennial year of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), I am pleased to present the quadrennial publication *Health in the Americas*, 2002 edition. With this publication, PAHO continues to respond to Member States' mandate to analyze and disseminate information on health situation and trends in the Region of the Americas. This publication presents, in two volumes, a Regional analysis and an analysis for each of the 47 countries and territories of the health situation and trends in the Americas from 1997 to 2000.

An important feature of this publication is its documentation of the effects of socioeconomic inequalities on the populations' health, particularly the relationship between income distribution and health status, viewed when countries are analyzed in groups. This relationship has an extremely important implication—it is possible to make significant improvements in health not only by promoting economic growth, but also by reducing income gaps within a country.

In broad terms, the Region's health situation can be viewed as a reflection of the dual impact of the demographic changes and shifts in epidemiological profiles. It also mirrors the effectiveness of health policies and the performance of the health systems. Some health problems still remain unresolved and new ones have emerged. Moreover, health problems are unequally distributed across the population and have differential effects on various groups. The health gains that have accumulated at the beginning of the 21st century are, in great measure, a tribute to the capacity of the countries to pursue the goal of "Health for All by the Year 2000," recognizing that it remains valid in the Region of the Americas even today.

This publication offers an updated assessment of overall health conditions in the Americas and, as such, contributes to a better understanding of its determinants. I encourage national health authorities, policy makers, scholars, researchers, health workers, and anyone committed to the advancement of public health in the Americas to take advantage of this valuable resource.

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Director



Pan American Health  
Organization  
Celebrating 100 Years of Health

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