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ADDRESS BY THE WINNER OF THE PAHO AWARD FOR ADMINISTRATION (2012)

DR. ARON NOWINSKI

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Hon. President of the Pan American Sanitary Conference
Hon. Director of the Pan American Health Organization
Hon. Ministers of Health and delegates from PAHO Member States
Hon. Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Hon. President of the PAHEF Board of Trustees
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am honored to accept the prestigious PAHO Award for Administration as recognition of all those who have worked to improve public health in my country.

I accept it on behalf of my friends and colleagues at the various health institutions in Uruguay and other countries in the Hemisphere where I have worked. Through their efforts and teamwork, these responsible colleagues have contributed to the health and well-being of our peoples, for in no other institution is teamwork more important than in health institutions.

I think now with gratitude of my family, most especially my wife, children, grandchildren, and great-grandson, and my very dear friends.

Let us also remember Dr. Stuart Portner, former Chief of Administration of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, who through a gift in 1969 instituted this annual award to contribute to the improvement of health administration systems. I recall Dr. Portner with gratitude. Thanks to his efforts, the administrative challenges faced by Uruguayan architect Román Fresnedo Siri during construction of PAHO's current headquarters were overcome. In 1961, through a Region-wide competition the design of the building was awarded to Mr. Fresnedo Siri, who received the International Architecture Award for the design.

Education of Health Service Administrators in Uruguay

I would like to pay grateful tribute to Dr. Mario Cassinoni, Professor and Dean of the Medical School and then Rector of the University of the Republic of Uruguay. He was the administrator and head of the university hospital. In August 1950, the *Hospital de Clínicas "Dr. Manuel Quintela"* was turned over to the Medical School, and the school

authorities were faced with the job of organizing this health care facility and getting it up and running. It was an *enormous* task. The hospital was unfinished and not fully equipped, but they needed to get it ready to open its doors; create structures to facilitate its effective operation; fill the wards with the school's clinics; and prepare trained staff to run a hospital devoted to both medical care and teaching (and do so without resources or precedent); and combat selfish interests and foster a generous, efficient, and responsible service ethic.

The task was accomplished in large part thanks to Dean Cassinoni. When the university took possession of the Hospital de Clínicas, I listened to Cassinoni deliver a speech. Allow me to share the following excerpt:

Hospital organization and administration is a new and little developed medical specialty in our environment. In order to effectively plan the multifaceted life of this institution, all of us in medicine have thought that we must look beyond our borders. Specialists of this order do not appear out of thin air; we lack the schools to train them.

We have believed it our duty to turn to foreign sources for guidance in this essential task.... A fundamental change is coming. We are at a new beginning. Research, education, and medical care will undergo a radical change. Its influence will be felt in all similar organizations and in all corners of the country. We professors and students will have to transform ourselves. The demands of yesterday imply a great responsibility. Another environment, another way of acting awaits us ...

The Medical School was the first institution in the country to recognize the specialty of hospital administration when the university's Central Board of Directors approved the General Regulations of the *Hospital Clínicas* on 25 April 1951 and stipulated that the director be a physician with a specialty in hospital administration.

From the earliest days of the University Hospital in 1950, the Medical School had to deal with a lack of specialists in medical administration. Therefore, the first stage of the teaching hospital's history lasted until the mid-1960s when the school tackled this challenge by undertaking activities designed to learn from experience and outside experts. From that first stage we would like to remember Odair Pacheco Pedroso (Brazil), David Sevlever (Argentina), Helvecio Tabárez (Uruguay), Hugo Enriquez Frödden (Chile), Guillermo Almenara Irigoyen (Peru), Miguel Solar (Chile) and the courses organized by the hospital administration in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Health and PAHO.

Uruguay does not have a School of Public Health—that is, a national reference institution for health development--despite the attempts to create one as part of the University of the Republic (1963) with the participation of PAHO (1993 and 1995), and under the Ministry of Public Health in conjunction with the Medical School and PAHO (1999).

Today, the Ministry of Public Health and PAHO are working together to establish a School of Public Health Administration, with a view to strengthening health system reform, improving management, training agents of change in health and public health professionals, and promoting the training of stakeholders committed to the principles of universality, solidarity, and social justice.

The people in Uruguay with training in this area pursued their education in the country or abroad.

In 1971 the management team at *Hospital Clínicas* prepared and published a document on the teaching of medical administration. Its purpose was to show the need for this training in order to educate professionals who could fully devote themselves to improving health services and medical school administration. We understood then the need to emphasize the training and education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, of middle- and senior management specialists in public health. This was a neglected endeavor, as there was no sector devoted to training high-level leaders to manage the health institutions and the system itself.

This public health specialty includes different areas and disciplines, such as health services administration or management, epidemiology, auditing, social sciences in health, health economics and occupational health, environmental health, etc., which are all dedicated to well-being, equity, quality, and—let me say it once more--social justice.

We are called upon to make every effort to train a critical mass of leaders who can assume the responsibility of administering the health services effectively, efficiently, and equitably to address the new challenges confronting public and private health services today and in the future in Uruguay.

We need leaders with the calling, generosity, and interest in teaching, who devote much of their time to education, and possess a knowledge of research techniques so that they can apply them in the field of administration in order to understand and encourage clinical, epidemiological, and results-based management research at their institutions.

Our countries need to train health administrators with this integrated approach, and my desire is to share with you the invitation that Dean Cassinoni extended in his address when Medical School took possession of the teaching hospital 62 years ago: "Let me take this opportunity to call on the young people here today to explore the field of hospital administration, a field that is useful to the country and surely promising for them as well."
