



**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AREA
IMMUNIZATION UNIT**

**First Meeting of the
American Regional Commission for
Certification of Poliovirus Laboratory
Containment and Verification of Polio-
free Status (AMR RCC)**

FINAL REPORT

Washington, D.C. - 22-23 March 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Terms of Reference	4
3. Achieving Laboratory Containment.....	5
4. Maintaining Polio-Free Status	6
5. Summary.....	6
6. Annexes:	
• Agenda.....	7
• List of Participants	12

1. Introduction

Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, interim Chairman of the Regional Commission, convened the first meeting of the American Regional Commission for Certification of Poliovirus Laboratory Containment and Verification of Polio-free Status (AMR RCC) on 22 March 2004 at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Director, PAHO and Dr. Gina Tambini, Director, Family and Community Health Area, welcomed the members of the Commission and others in attendance and reaffirmed PAHO's commitment to childhood immunization and the global certification of polio eradication. Dr. Roses reviewed the challenges before the Commission and pledged PAHO's full support.

Commission members attending were Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, Brazil (Chair); Dr. Jesus Kumate Rodriguez, Mexico; Dr. Lissette Navas, Costa Rica; Dr. Claudette Harry, Guyana; Dr. Alexandre Existe, Haiti; and Dr. Walter Dowdle (Rapporteur).

National Committee representatives attending were Dr. Gladys Crespo, Bolivia; Dr. Marlene Matos, Brazil; Dr. Francisco Becerra, Mexico; Dr. Mark Pallansch, USA; and Dr. Jesus Querales Castillo, Venezuela.

In 1994, an independent *International Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (ICCPE)*, established by PAHO's Director, certified the Region of the Americas polio-free. The Commission and most *National Committees for Certification (NCC)* dissolved shortly thereafter. Laboratory containment of wild poliovirus was not then an issue. In 1997, the newly established *Global Commission for the Certification of the Eradication of Poliomyelitis (GCC)* expressed concern that poliovirus stocks in laboratories could present a formidable threat to the ultimate success of eradication. In 1998, the GCC declared adequate containment a precondition for global certification. Certification of containment was included in the terms of reference for all *Regional Commissions for Certification (RCC)*.

Global eradication is now in sight. The Region of the Americas remains free of wild poliovirus transmission after nearly 13 years, a remarkable tribute to the commitment of member countries and the efforts of PAHO. By the end of 2003, all but six countries of the world had eliminated polio. If current supplemental immunization efforts prove successful, poliovirus global transmission could be interrupted as early as 2005, with certification as early as 2008.

In February 2004, the Director of PAHO established the American Regional Commission for Certification of Poliovirus Laboratory Containment and Verification of Polio-free Status to meet the GCC requirements for global certification. The role of the Regional Commission is to independently document that wild poliovirus in laboratories is adequately contained and verify that the polio-free status of the Region is unchanged. This is the first meeting of the Commission.

2. Terms of Reference

Dr. Jon Andrus, Chief, Immunization Unit, reviewed the tentative Terms of Reference for the Commission as described by PAHO's Director in her invitation to Commission members:

- Evaluate reports from National Committees to assess accuracy of survey and inventory;
- Make recommendations as appropriate to National Committees and to the Pan American Health Organization in compliance with the Global Commission for the Certification of the Eradication of Poliomyelitis (GCC); and
- Present progress and final reports to the GCC, dealing with containment as well as with acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance.

The Commission is a “work in progress”. Within its terms of reference, it creates its own rules, decides its own needs, and requests information as necessary to carry out its responsibilities consistent with GCC recommendations. It is an independent body. Members act only in their personal capacity. Members may be requested by the Secretariat or the Commission to attend technical or sub-regional meetings and visit selected countries for reviews and to stimulate progress toward global certification. The National Certification Committees are similarly independent bodies, responsible for overseeing the documentation of containment and verification of continued polio-free status in their own countries.

The Commission is similar to other RCCs reporting directly to the GCC, but it differs from the others in being constituted in a Region already certified polio-free. Only certification of containment and verification of its polio-free status remains. The Commission looks forward to working with the Secretariat in reviewing these historical differences and the proposed name and terms of reference that accurately reflect its responsibilities and those of National Committees.

Decisions:

1. Each country should establish a National Committee to independently assess and endorse such national reports and documents on containment and polio-free status as requested by the Commission. Routine information on polio immunization, surveillance, and laboratory performance should continue to flow through established PAHO channels.
2. The Secretariat should draft, for review and adoption by the Commission, a manual of operations that defines the roles of all responsible bodies in the global certification process. The operating manual should specify reporting requirements and formats for submissions from National Committees to the Commission and from the Commission to the GCC on containment and polio-free status.

3. The Secretariat should draft, for review and adoption by the Commission, a Regional plan of action with a proposed timetable to ensure transparency of the global process and links to global eradication and certification.
4. The Secretariat should keep Commission Members informed of progress in the Region and explore the establishment of a Commission website for public access.
5. The Secretariat should provide information to be reviewed by the members periodically and at least two weeks in advance of scheduled meetings.

3. Achieving laboratory containment

The Commission commends PAHO for initiating the laboratory survey and inventory phase of laboratory containment in the last quarter of 2001 with letters to Ministers of Health. National working groups and plans of action were scheduled for development in 2002, with initial surveys and inventories scheduled for completion in 2003. Calls for interim reports of activities were made in the later half of 2003. The Commission is pleased to note that 39 of 47 countries responded, with eight countries reporting completion of the survey and 32 countries reporting some or substantial progress. The Commission commends Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and the United States on their progress toward completion of national surveys and inventories. Their presentations to the Commission proved to be valuable in clarifying the issues and challenges ahead. Much work remains to be done by most countries in the Region, with considerable attention to quality and completeness of surveys and inventories.

Decisions:

1. The Secretariat should prepare and distribute in appropriate languages the 2nd edition of the *WHO Global Action Plan for laboratory containment of wild polioviruses (WHO/V&B/03.11)* and the *WHO Guidelines on documenting the thoroughness and accuracy of conducting the laboratory survey and establishing a national inventory of laboratory retaining wild poliovirus*. These documents should be accompanied by specific formats and instructions to ensure clarity, consistency, and quality of country reports.
2. Countries should ensure that all biomedical laboratories in all relevant government and private sectors (as outline in the *Global Action Plan*) are considered in the containment process. Justification should be provided for any laboratory or category of laboratories that were excluded from the survey process.
3. Countries should establish a strong central focus for the national laboratory survey and inventory and appoint a responsible coordinator to ensure Regional standards in methodologies, quality, and completeness of results.

4. National Committees should inform the Commission of any change in inventory status after submission.

4. Maintaining polio-free status

The Commission congratulates the Region on continuing high levels of AFP surveillance and notes that overall vaccine coverage has actually improved since the Region was declared polio-free in 1994. Although the Region is performing well overall, the Commission is particularly concerned about high-risk populations and under-served areas.

Decisions:

1. The Secretariat should provide a comprehensive annual overview of regional achievements in maintaining polio-free status by:
 - Analyzing country reports using standard reporting formats and quality indicators for AFP surveillance, laboratory activities, and immunization coverage;
 - Grouping countries for special review according to progress in meeting performance criteria and reducing levels of risk;
 - Reporting results of supplemental surveillance methodologies in addition to AFP; and
 - Identifying high-risk populations and describing progress in increasing vaccine coverage.
2. National Committees should provide an independent assessment of country data and documents and report annually to the Commission.

5. Summary

The Commission has reviewed progress in the Region towards meeting the requirements for global certification of polio eradication. The Commission recognizes that the challenge in the Americas differs from that in other Regions in that nearly 10 years have elapsed since it was certified polio-free. Strong national political endorsement is required in many countries to revive or create new laboratory awareness, government infrastructures, and National Committees. The Commission commends PAHO and the countries of the Region for progress that has been made, but notes that much work remains. The Commission is confident that with appropriate national and regional support all certification requirements will be met in a timely fashion.



First Meeting of the American Regional Commission for Certification of Poliovirus Laboratory Containment and Verification of Polio-free Status (AMR RCC)

22-23 March 2004
PAHO Headquarters, Room C

Monday, 22 March 22 2004

8:45 a.m.	Registration/Coffee	
9:00 a.m.	Official Opening	Director
	Opening remarks and Objectives of the Meeting	Dr. Jon Andrus
	Nomination of Chair-person and Rapporteur of AMR RCC	
	Approval of agenda	

STATUS OF POLIO ERADICATION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF AMR RCC:

9:30 a.m.	Progress towards Global Polio Eradication	Dr. Rudi Tangerman
10:00 a.m.	Regional Polio Eradication Update	Dr. Mauricio Landaverde
10:20 a.m.	Terms of reference of AMR RCC	Dr. Jon Andrus
10:30 a.m.	<i>Coffee/Tea Break</i>	
11:00 a.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	

Questions to be addressed:

Are the Terms of Reference sufficient to help ensure that containment is reached and AFP surveillance quality adequate?
Is the Region of the Americas free of indigenous wild poliovirus?
Is the Region of the Americas complying with AFP surveillance?

**REQUIREMENTS OF THE GLOBAL CERTIFICATION COMMISSION
FOR POLIO ERADICATION**

11:30 a.m. Requirements from GCC for Polio Eradication Dr. Carlyle G. de Macedo

11:50 a.m. Discussion and Recommendations

Questions to be addressed:

Are the requirements from GCC clear for the Regional Commission?
Are there specific activities that the Regional Commission needs to complete in order to comply with those requirements?
Is progress in the Region of the Americas on schedule with requirements? If not, what needs to be done?

12:30 p.m. Lunch (1 ½ Hr.)

STATUS OF CONTAINMENT

2:00 p.m. Role of containment in Global Certification Dr. Christian Wolff

Global update Dr. Christian Wolff

2:45 p.m. Regional update Dr. Ana Bispo

3:00 p.m. Discussion and Recommendations

Questions to be addressed:

Are the guidelines for containment appropriate?
Is the progress on containment adequate in the Region of the Americas?

Are there other specific concerns for the Regional Commission regarding containment?

3:30 p.m. Coffee/Tea Break

COUNTRY EXPERIENCE IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS

4:00 p.m. Bolivia Lic. Gladys Crespo

4:20 p.m. USA Dr. Mark Pallansch

4:40 p.m. Discussion and Recommendations

Questions to be addressed:

Is the Regional Commission satisfied with the quality of surveys?

Is the Regional Commission confident with country results?

Are there specific recommendations for the National Committees to improve quality of surveys?

5:00 p.m. Adjournment

Tuesday, 23 March 2004

9:00 a.m.	Brazil	Dr. Marlene Matos
9:20 a.m.	Venezuela	Dr. Jesús Querales
9:40a.m	Mexico	Dr. Adolfo Martinez
10:00 a.m.	<i>Discussion and Recommendations</i>	

Questions to be addressed:

*Is the Regional Commission satisfied with the quality of surveys?
Is the Regional Commission confident with country results?
Are there specific recommendations for the National Committees to improve quality of surveys?*

10:30 a.m. *Coffee/Tea Break*

**ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE GLOBAL CERTIFICATION COMMISSION**

11:00 a.m.	Phase II and III: The future of containment	Dr. Christian Wolff
11:30 a.m.	Plan of Action for the next three years	Chairman
11:45 a.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	

Questions to be addressed:

*Are phases II and III clear for the Regional Commission?
Is the Plan of Action addressing requirements from GCC?
Is the Regional Commission satisfied with progress on containment and quality of AFP surveillance?
Are there specific recommendations from the Regional Commission?*

12:30 p.m. *Lunch (1 ½ Hr.)*



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization



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Washington, D.C. - 22-23 March 2004

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