

Regional Initiatives to Empower Young Medical Doctors: The Young Stroke Latin American Task Force

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Dear Editor,

Local and regional cooperation may strengthen efforts to reduce stroke burden in low-resource settings. New generations full of energy, honoring the past achievements of mentors and current stroke leaders, have the potential to stimulate stroke research and prevention and implement the available evidence-based treatments. This article presents how a local initiative focused on young stroke professionals may promote comprehensive stroke care in the region. We will present the creation of Alianza Joven Latinoamericana contra el ACV (ALATAC), its main purpose and

objectives, the structure organization, the committees, ongoing activities, the potential results to be achieved, and how to become a member of this group.

Stroke has devastating consequences at the individual and social levels. The impact is even higher in low- and middle-income countries, where 80% of stroke cases will occur by 2030 [1, 2]. Latin America (LA-TAM) and the Caribbean region are within this context, presenting several gaps that demand the translation of strategic initiatives and the settlement of collaboration toward an action plan to reduce stroke burden [3].

A well-organized and structured group has the potential to influence and enhance regional initiatives, developing new strategies to optimize stroke research, education, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. The American Stroke Association (ASA), the European Stroke Organization (ESO), and the Ibero-American Stroke Organization (SIECV) have previously been good examples and have shown the power of regional and international collaboration.

Recently, programs have been created to empower the next generation of stroke professionals. The Future Stroke Leaders Program from the World Stroke Organization (WSO) and the ESO Initiative Young Stroke Physicians and Researchers Committee (YSPR), among others, contributed to the foundation of the Young Stroke Latin American Task Force (ALATAC).

There are few formal leadership and mentorship programs in the field and also few stroke fellowship programs. Knowing the importance of having a network to discuss complex cases, improve scientific knowledge of stroke, share problems, and create solutions, the organization of this young group is helping numerous future young leaders in stroke. The group has a sense of responsibility that we are improving the treatment of stroke in the region, leaving a legacy for new generations to continue our work. Concentrating efforts on the same purpose will enable us to achieve more concrete results. Therefore, this short communication presents ALATAC's structure, organization, objectives, and potential achievements.

The ALATAC

The group comprises early-career stroke neurologists, neurointerventionalists, and physicians involved in stroke care, motivated to join efforts and reduce stroke disparities. A total of 100 members from 17 Latin American countries compose the task force (Fig. 1; members of ALATAC in LATAM). Table 1 summarizes the group characteristics. We plan to include allied professionals (nonmedical) progressively in the near future.

In April 2022, the group's initial concept occurred in Colombia during an academic meeting. On that occasion, most members found they shared similar problems and difficulties and ran convergent projects in their countries. After that, they decided to build this task force, considering that the pulling efforts of a vast and diverse group could achieve more significant and relevant results.

To connect the members and promote network communication, Dr. Julieta Rosales, an Argentinian stroke neurologist, and Dr. Ángel Corredor, a Colombian neurologist, organized a group in a multiplatform messaging app,

creating a Latin American young task force resembling the YSPR. ALATAC turned into an organized and geographically representative group in a few months. After an election among all members, Dr. Julieta Rosales was democratically elected the president, and Dr. Ángel Corredor was the secretary. Also, the initiative was associated with the SIECV, and the first scientific meeting was held at the II Global Stroke Alliance in Sao Paulo in August 2022.

Purpose and Objectives

The task force's main purpose is to assemble an inclusive, collaborative, and diverse group of young Latin American professionals to improve and disseminate stroke research, education, and prevention and implement acute and post-acute management. The objectives are as follows:

- To raise awareness for stroke in the region, focusing on prevention and education;
- To promote stroke research;
- To reduce stroke treatment access disparities in LATAM, collaborating with local authorities, stakeholders, and decision-makers to foster and improve national health policies for a comprehensive stroke treatment implementation;
- To offer networking opportunities and access to scholarships for specialized stroke training and endovascular procedures.

Structuring and Organizing the Task Force

ALATAC is structured into six committees, each with a respective leader, to achieve different objectives:

Education Committee

Education committee is directed by Dr. Vanessa Cano Nigenda from Mexico and focused on stroke physicians, general physicians, and population education. This group coordinates strategic activities like stroke congresses, highlight webinars, hot topic lectures, challenging cases, and paper of the month presentations and capsules with mentors and leading stroke specialists. The group spread educational videos on stroke symptoms and prevention at the populational level.

Implementation Committee

Implementation committee is directed by Dr. Tony Fabián Alvarez from Colombia. This group assists with multidisciplinary acute stroke treatment training programs, protocol implementation, stroke unit structuring,

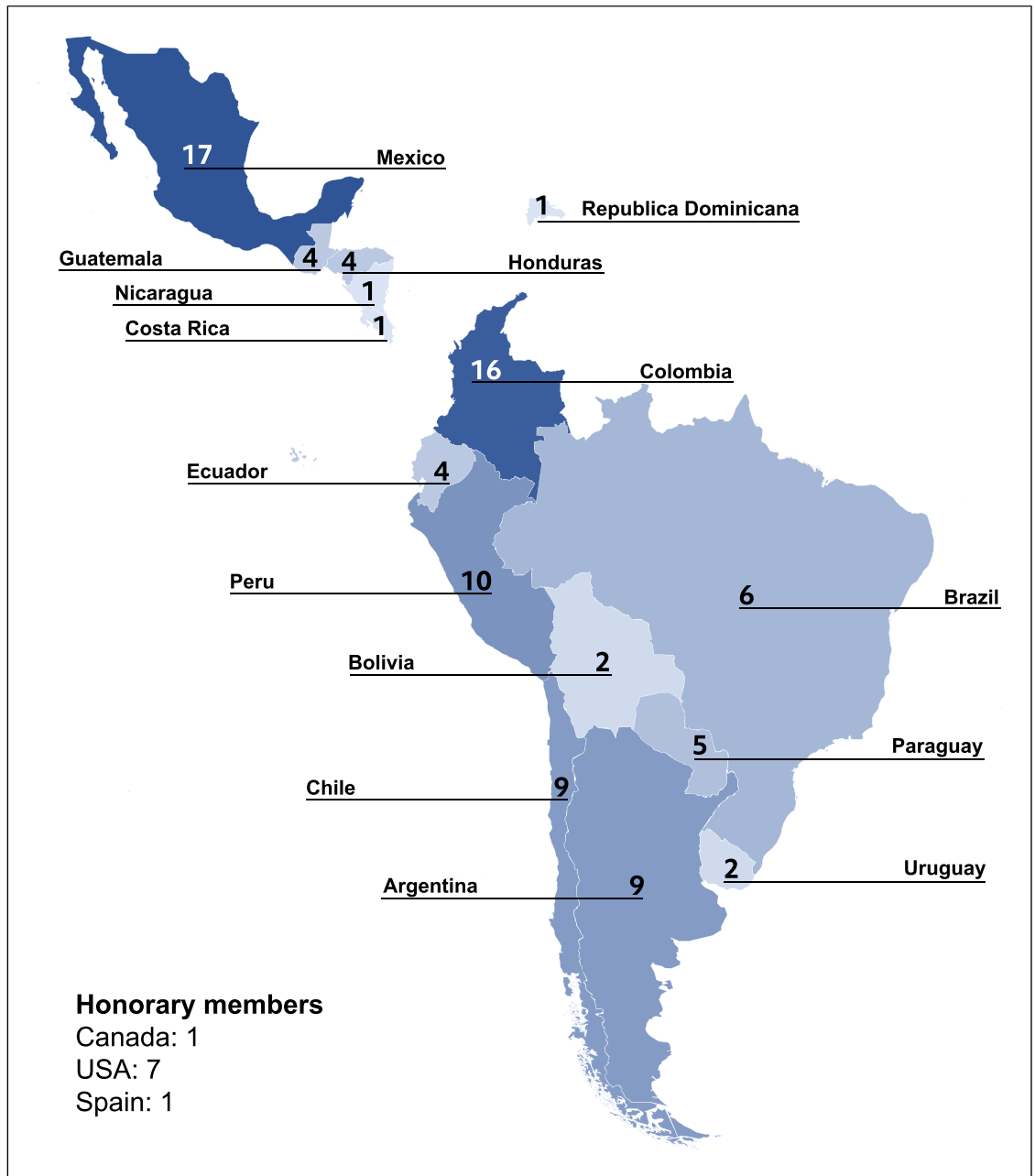


Fig. 1. Geographical distribution of ALATAC members in LATAM by country of work. Data source: online survey sent on February 2023 ($n = 100$ respondents).

and local stroke network building. The members work in the Latin American Stroke Certification program (WSO/Ibero-American Stroke Organization), helping through the certification process.

Investigation Committee

Investigation committee is directed by Dr. Leonardo Carbonera from Brazil. This group encourages research initiatives in LATAM by publicizing ongoing investigations

in the region and promoting regional collaboration to achieve the research results. It also provides training and oversight on research methodology topics and aims to build a regional stroke database.

Mentoring Committee

Mentoring committee is directed by Dr. Karen Orjuela from USA/Colombia and Dr. Pablo Amaya from Colombia. This team organizes updating talks on

Table 1. Group characteristics

Total members	100
Male, %	70
Age (mean±SD), years	37±5
Subspeciality, <i>n</i>	
Neurology	88
Neurointervention	11
Physiotherapy	1
Level of education, <i>n</i>	
Residence	14
Fellowship	48
Doctor of philosophy (PhD)	5
Master of Science (MSc)	25
Postgraduation <i>lato sensu</i>	5
Workspace, <i>n</i>	
Public	13
Private	24
Both	63

topics of interest with mentor and coordinate rotations with international mentors in stroke units (preceptorship).

Social Media Committee

Social media committee is directed by Dr. Rodrigo Guerrero from Chile. This group communicates via Twitter (@ALATACV) and YouTube (@alianzajovenlatinoamericano5951) all the ALATAC activities, promotes teaching courses for physicians and patients, and shares relevant information for the region.

Latam yoUng woMeN In stroke (LUMNI) Committee

Latam yoUng woMeN In stroke (LUMNI) committee is directed by Dr. Ana Cláudia de Souza and Dr. Julieta Rosales. This group aims to empower and engage more young women in the stroke field in LATAM, initially increasing participation in stroke programs during neurology residency and stroke fellowships. We will promote the inclusion of more women in stroke forums for upcoming scientific activities (ALATAC, Global Stroke Alliance, and SIECV conferences). The committee will work to include women leadership in research projects and to address the gender disparities in regional stroke trials.

Ongoing Activities

The group has performed monthly meetings for all members to provide updates on stroke area, to bring highlights of important stroke conferences, and to discuss complex cases. A research project to gather stroke epidemiological data has recently started. The group developed an acute stroke care implementation project that will start soon with

the support of the WSO and ANGELS Initiative, helping countries establish and organize acute stroke care in LATAM (Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador).

How to Become a Member and Collaborate

To become an effective member, the person must be involved in stroke care, be up to 45 years old at the time of joining, and live and work in LATAM. Professionals born in LATAM but who live and work in other countries are considered honorary members. People interested can contact us via e-mail (alatacv@gmail.com) or social media (Twitter @ALATACV).

Conclusion

Unifying local initiatives into the ALATAC allows the coordination and gathering of early carriers' talents, already engaged in promoting advances in their countries. New generations full of energy and innovative ideas have the potential to stimulate stroke research and education, develop new targeted treatments, and implement the available evidence-based treatments in low-resource countries, optimizing and developing national stroke plans.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors reported no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Data Availability Statement

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.