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# FOREWORD

## Health equity in the Americas

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This issue of *Salud Pública de México* includes a special section on Health Equity in the Americas which focuses on research studies and interventions related to this broad topic that reaches across the diverse populations of the Americas. These papers have the particular purpose of disseminating evidence to promote and accelerate equity within the area of cancer prevention and control; they are the result of national and international collaborations between researchers and government and community organizations of the United States and Latin America.

We recognize that advances have been made in many areas of disease prevention, including cancer, the focus of these papers. However, avoidable disease burden persists, and some vulnerable groups suffer from substantial disparities in the control and prevention of cancer. Of particular concern are those with limited resources and populations at high risk of disease who have not yet benefitted from the full use of new technologies and preventive methods or from optimal educational campaigns to reduce their risks of cancer.

The Center for Health Equity in the Americas (Cen-Health), the Department of Preventive Medicine of the Keck School of Medicine, and the Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center of the University of Southern California (USC), the Health Foundation of the University of Southern Florida in Panama, Buena Salud Americas of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, as well as some 54 visionary leaders from various sectors, joined forces to address inequities related to cancer in the Americas. A meeting was held in Panama on October 7-8, 2016, for the purpose of jointly developing an agenda for research and action. During the meeting, the attendees considered the

status of existing evidence, points for action, and research that could be carried out with the emerging technologies. Attention was given to how to move to action, drawing on the insights of policy-makers and practitioners of the governmental sector. An over-arching goal was to focus the attention of the public health sector on viable mechanisms and strategies to reduce health disparities in the Americas. We present here selected papers from the meeting, written by 38 authors representing more than 16 institutions and multiple countries of Latin America as well as the United States.

The papers address special and innovative topics, such as the current status of and emerging challenges in the prevention and control of tobacco use; the link between primary care and community organizations to increase the early detection of colorectal cancer, the environmental and occupational causes of diseases in the Americas, diet and physical activity and obesogenic environments as targets for cancer prevention and control, and new methods and technologies to measure diet and physical activity, among others. Also considered is implementation, based on a decision-making framework and considering barriers to using proven strategies. In regard to this critical topic, barriers to the early detection of cervical cancer were addressed, giving consideration to cultural and system approaches to enhance utilization of screening. Narratives and storytelling have been used for that purpose, an approach that may have broader application to accelerate the achievement of equity in health in the United States and Latin America. The integration of these papers in this issue provides some innovative directions to the persistent public health challenges posed by health inequities.

We want to thank all the institutions, community organizations, and members of civil society, academic and governmental institutions that participated in the strategic planning summit. Above all, we thank the authors who worked without geographic borders in the preparation of the papers included here on the prevention and control of cancer in the Americas. We hope that the readers of *Salud Pública de México*, as well as all interested in health equity, will find here innovative approaches to advance their efforts to achieve social

justice in health, especially for those still marginalized in our society.

*Declaration of conflict of interests.* The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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