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The Federation’s Pages

WFPHA: World Federation of Public Health Associations
www.wfpha.org

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Journal of Public Health Policy (2017), doi:10.1057/jp4.1371-017-0065-0

World Federation of Public Health Associations: 50 years of international leadership for a healthy global society

Summary
The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) with official relations to the World Health Organization (WHO) and other United Nations’ (UN) agencies. It represents the global community of national and regional public health associations (PHAs) and the worldwide body of public health professionals who work to improve, protect, and promote the public’s health. Its mission is to bring a multi-disciplinary, population health-based approach to solving public health problems. The WFPHA celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017. During this first half-century, the WFPHA has played an important role in helping strengthen the capacity of national public health associations to effect positive health changes within their respective jurisdictions, to contribute to advancing public health approaches to the world’s pressing issues, and to bring a strong, evidence-based public health voice to global health policy discussions.
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Bionote
Margaret Hilson trained as a nurse with a specialization in Environmental Studies. Her long career in international health development began in 1968 with Canadian University Services Overseas as a community health nurse educator in India. She was subsequently appointed by WHO to a regional training team in Nepal, Thailand and Indonesia. Ms. Hilson was the Director of International Programs of the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) from 1985 until her retirement from CPHA in 2006. She managed CPHA’s internationally-recognized Strengthening of Public Health Associations (SOPHA) Program. Ms. Hilson recently retired from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. Ms. Hilson’s 20-year long contribution to the WFPHA was recognized when she was awarded the Federation’s prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, presented to her in Addis Ababa in 2012. Her service in public health was also recognized with the awarding of the International Council of Nursing’s Florence Nightingale Award for International Achievement, PAHO’s Health Heros (one of 17 Canadians to receive this honour), the Order of Canada (the country’s highest civilian honour), and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Presidency Highlights
• Strengthened WFPHA’s management and organizational capacity
• Co-chaired the planning of the 9th World Congress on Public Health (Beijing, China: September 2000)
• Organized and hosted a prestigious Global Health Leadership Forum with over 40 invited public health leaders from UN organizations, governments and civil society organizations
Bionote

Dr. Hugh Rodman Leavell, born in 1902 in Louisville (Kentucky), received his medical degree from Harvard University and his MPH from Yale University. He began his public health career in 1934, when he was appointed public health director of Louisville. In 1942, he joined the U.S. Public Health Service. He subsequently served as Deputy Director of Health in the European Regional Office of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration from 1944-1945. The following year, Dr. Leavell was named Professor and Head of the Department of Public Health Practice of the Harvard School of Public Health, where he also served as Assistant Dean from 1954 to 1962. While there, he developed an innovative and broad curriculum including courses on environmental health, social hygiene, community health care and mental hygiene. He advocated for collaboration and interaction with other disciplines to address emerging issues such as urban growth. He inaugurated the Bridge of Health mission during the 1960s, visiting health ministries in an effort to build cooperative health programs. He served as a Ford Foundation consultant in India from 1963 to 1969, on health administration and family planning.

Dr. Leavell was a long-standing member of the American Public Health Association. He served as its President in 1954.

He, along with Dr. Ernest L. Stebbins, was one of the key people who advocated for the formation of a global organization representing national public health associations, and he was instrumental in making its creation a reality in 1967. He served as the Federation’s second Executive Secretary from 1968 to 1972 and was intimately responsible for many of the early developments of the WFPHA, including its recognition as a non-governmental organization in official relations with WHO. He served as Director of a joint APHA-WFPHA International study of voluntary health organizations.

Dr. Leavell passed away in 1976. In his honour, the WFPHA launched, in 1979, the Hugh R. Leavell lecture ship. It was transformed in the 1980s to become one of the WFPHA’s most prestigious award, bestowed triennially in recognition of an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to global public health.

Source: American Public Health Association
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WFPHA Milestones

1966
- May: Initial meetings to discuss the concept of forming an international organization representing national public health associations. Decision taken to call it World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)
- October: meeting in San Francisco during 94th American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting during which WFPHA constitution drafted

1967
- May 20: three meetings took place on this day (inaugural business meeting, 1st meeting of the WFPHA Executive Board, 1st WFPHA Annual General Assembly meeting) which launched the WFPHA
- Dr. K.N. Rao (President, Indian Public Health Association) elected as the WFPHA’s first President; Dr. A. Hutchison (Chair, Royal Society of Health (UK)) as Vice-President; and, Dr. E.L. Stebbins (APHA) as the WFPHA’s first Executive Secretary

1968:
- WFPHA establishes WHO Liaison Office in Geneva
- APHA begins housing/supporting the WFPHA secretariat office

1969:
- WFPHA appoints Liaison Officers for each WHO region as a means of helping expand WFPHA membership and coordinate the Federation’s activities within each region

1970
- Milbank Memorial Fund provides a grant to the APHA to work with the WFPHA to determine the potential of NGOs and national PHAs to become more effective advocates and help their respective governments improve basic health services to all of their population
- WFPHA publishes its member newsletter
- WFPHA launches annual Public Health Technical Discussions at WHO headquarters in Geneva, to coincide with World Health Assembly

1971
- WHO Executive Board approves the WFPHA’s status as an NGO in official relations with the WHO

1972
- UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) approves the WFPHA’s status as an NGO in official relations with the ECOSOC
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COVER STORY
The birth of the WFPHA
On May 20, 1967, the representatives of public health associations met on three occasions to officially launch the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA). Here’s the story about the WFPHA’s foundation process and the events that led up to it.

FEATURE STORY
The people and organizations behind the creation of the WFPHA
Several individuals and organizations were key to the conceptualization and process to found an international organization representing the world-wide community of national public health associations.

HUGH R. LEAVELL LECTURE
A review of different perspectives on public health over the years as seen through the perspective of recipients of the WFPHA’s highest honour, the Hugh R. Leavell Award.

PHOTO ESSAY
The people and events that shaped WFPHA over its first 50 years

QUO VADIS? THE WFPHA’S FUTURE
Where does the WFPHA go from here? A look at its possible future path.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE WFPHA
The WFPHA went through several stages of development through its 50 year history. This article documents some of the Federation’s main milestones and achievements over the years.

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