

ILAE Vice President Annual Report 2023

In 2023, as the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) vice president, I again had the honor to be part of the important work in the areas of advocacy, education, and research in epilepsy. While I am enthusiastic about contributing more, certain barriers, particularly the geographical distance of Latin America where I am located, pose challenges. Nonetheless, although the majority of my activities have been focused on and within the region, they may be useful to be disseminated globally, especially in developing countries.



*Roberto Horacio Caraballo,
ILAE vice president*

Within the ongoing activities of development of epilepsy training courses for healthcare workers and key groups in the society, an epilepsy training program for nurses was created, with didactic material in the format of a book. The book covers topics such as the nurse's role in epilepsy patient care, seizure management, the impact of seizures on children, developmental disorders related to epilepsy, epilepsy in the sports setting, and the nurse's role in implementing the ketogenic diet. The full-day program, with presentations by epilepsy specialists, concludes with an open discussion session allowing participants to ask questions and express their concerns. To evaluate the program's impact, pre- and post-course questionnaires are administered, assessing participants' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) regarding epilepsy. Four such courses were conducted in Argentina this year. This well-developed program is apt for dissemination to other regions, potentially with the assistance of the ILAE Nursing Section. In addition, in the meetings the possibility was raised to develop a specialized course for nurses working with people with epilepsy.



Epilepsy training program for nurses

Another part of the epilepsy education program targets primary healthcare professionals working in indigenous communities, as well as the police and religious leaders. Successful pilots of these courses were conducted in different towns in Argentina. Undoubtedly, education should be continuous, extending to the entire community, raising awareness about epilepsy, and promoting the integration of individuals with epilepsy into the society without discrimination.



Pilot course of education in epilepsy for the police force

In my role as liaison for the Latin American region, I supported the organization of various scientific meetings with endorsement of the ILAE this year. In September, a meeting on status epilepticus was held in Mendoza, Argentina, with guest speakers Eugen Trinko (strategic advisor), Sam Wiebe (past president), and Mario Alonso (ILAE-Latin America chair). In November, the Young Epilepsy Section (YES) Latin America meeting, where ILAE President Dr. Helen Cross spoke about leadership, brought together the young epileptologists of the region. The meeting was inspiring for the young and not so young participants. It was the first regional meeting of YES, and it could be important to develop this type of meetings in other regions. In addition, a symposium on the ketogenic diet took place in Buenos Aires, led by Dr. Marisa Armeno, within the framework of the ILAE Task Force on Dietary Therapy, with guest speakers Dr. Jong Rho and Dr. Elles van der Louw. All the meetings were hybrid, facilitating the participation of attendees from throughout the region and beyond.

As a liaison of ILAE Latin-America, I have contributed to the scientific committee of the XIII Latin American Epilepsy Congress to be held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 15 to 18 June 2024. Additionally, I participated in the Scientific Committee of the successful 35th International Epilepsy Congress in Dublin and in several working groups, including the ILAE-Latin America regional board, Diagnostics Methods Commission, Pediatrics Commission, Telemedicine Task Force, and as a Management Committee liaison.

Advances continue in developing a new strategic plan and action plan on epilepsy in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2021-2031, focusing on research, epidemiology, legislation, prevention, mental health, telemedicine, education, and online training, with support from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).



Meeting on status epilepticus with guest speakers Eugen Trinkka (second from right), Sam Wiebe (fourth from right) and Mario Alanso (fifth from right)



ILAE-YES Latin America meeting with participation from ILAE President J Helen Cross

Furthermore, directors of the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers for Epilepsy in Latin America, the Chilean League Against Epilepsy, and the Autonomous University of Honduras have collaborated on strategies to disseminate the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders (IGAP) in the region. Therefore, in the XIII Latin American Epilepsy Congress, a pre-congress IGAP workshop 2024 will be held entitled "Implementation Challenges in Latin America," identifying priorities, promoting regional development, sharing successful local strategies, planning interventions, among other objectives.

Finally, in a corporation between Spain and Latin America, an online master's degree in Pediatric Epilepsy was created for Spanish-speaking professionals, providing education access for healthcare professionals working in the field of epilepsy in Spanish-speaking, low-resource countries. The program was developed by Panamericana, the most important medical editorial

in the Spanish language and the European University of Madrid. This degree may serve as a model for similar courses addressing professionals worldwide.

Highlights of 2023 were the success of the 35th International Epilepsy Congress in Dublin, Ireland, and witnessing the collaborative efforts of the young epileptologists in the regional meeting as well as the enthusiasm to learn about epilepsy shown by nurses, members of the police force and religious leaders.

Roberto Horacio Caraballo
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