

PREFACE

The need to count with reliable and up-to-date information susceptible of a systematic and integrated analysis for the planning of food and nutrition interventions has been increasingly felt in recent years, particularly in the developing countries. This applies to actions, both in the development process as well as in emergency cases.

In Latin America nutritional injuries constitute not only a serious health problem but also an obstacle for the development of the countries. For this reason, a group of scientists and technologists in various disciplines met in Caracas in November, 1976, to study the most practical way of facing the difficult problem related to the availability of adequate statistical-epidemiological information in the food and nutrition field. Concretely, the purpose was to examine this important subject approaching it from all of its angles, with the objective of finding feasible means of maintaining a continuous flow of data to build a series of indicators. It was felt that interpretation of the behavior of these indicators would permit early detection of certain situations at any given moment and predict deterioration or improvement of those situations.

The support and partial financial aid of the United Nations University (World Hunger Program), provided through INCAP as Associated Institution of this University, made possible this Colloquium on "Nutritional Epidemiological Surveillance Systems". The Colloquium was held as part of the IV Latin American Nutrition Congress organized by the Latin American Nutrition Society, the Government of Venezuela through its National Institute of Nutrition and the Venezuelan Nutrition Society. Partial financial help was also received from the Research Corporation. Special mention of the Ex-President of SLAN, Dr. Guillermo Arroyave, should also be made, since during his service period he promoted and took the necessary steps for the celebration of the Colloquium and coordinated with great enthusiasm this important event.

This Supplement of the well-known Journal of the Society, *Archivos Latino-americanos de Nutrición*, compiles all the papers and comments presented during the Colloquium, where specialists in diverse disciplines approached the different components of a food and nutrition multisectoral surveillance system. This, of course, was imperative, since as is generally accepted, nutrition problems are of a multifactorial causality. The system is considered as an essential, integrated, early and timely instrument of multisectoral planning, and of coordination of the needed strategies for an effective action.

We wish to acknowledge our most sincere appreciation to the Latin American Nutrition Society and to its present President, Dr. Werner G. Jaffé. The collaboration and valuable support of the Society made possible the publication of the Proceedings of the Colloquium on "Nutritional Epidemiological Surveillance Systems". The assistance rendered by Mrs. Amalia G. de Ramírez, Chief of the Editorial and Publications Office of *Archivos Latinoamericanos de Nutrición*, who translated and edited the papers presented, was most helpful in the publication of this English version of the Colloquium.

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