

Press Release

For immediate release



Latin American patient groups are central to improving access to healthcare in the region

London, UK, 22 October 2009 – The **International Alliance of Patients' Organizations** (IAPO) together with four regional supporting organizations: **Concebir** (Argentina), **Esperantra** (Peru), the **Asociacion Fibro America** (Argentina) and the **Argentine Cystic Fibrosis Association** (FIPAN), held a regional workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina for patient groups in Latin America on 13-14 October 2009. Bringing together 27 patient groups from 11 Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and Peru, the workshop continued IAPO's work to support patient groups to promote patient-centred healthcare globally. As a result of the workshop, these groups are developing strategies to overcome the shared challenges they face in accessing healthcare services and treatments. These joint efforts and participating in healthcare decision-making will strengthen healthcare delivery in Latin America.

The workshop focussed on exploring how patient groups' contribution to healthcare policy making can improve access to healthcare services and treatments. Non-communicable diseases (chronic diseases) such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, are exerting an increasing burden on healthcare systems throughout the region. This increase has deeply negative consequences for the quality of life of patients as well as prospects for social and economic development. Addressing the widespread inequalities in the availability of services and treatments is just one of the many challenges that patient groups can work towards, providing information around patients needs so that healthcare delivery reflects patient preferences.

In order to cope with this increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, health systems need to develop so that they are able to address the ongoing needs of patients. IAPO believes this can only happen with the meaningful engagement of patient representatives in the development of healthcare policies at all levels. Following the workshop, the patient groups met with Argentine Ministry of Health officials, the national nursing association and healthcare stakeholders to discuss practical strategies for strengthening healthcare systems in the region.

Highlighting the success of the workshop, Blanca Mesistrano, President, Associacon Civil FibroAmerica speaking on behalf of the IAPO regional members, said, *"This workshop has provided a unique opportunity for Latin American patients' organizations to meet and develop solutions to the common challenges we face, regardless of disease area or geographical location. The workshop has given us the opportunity to share knowledge and resources which will greatly help us to be more effective in the work we do and best serve the patients we represent."*

IAPO is positive about taking forward work with these groups and maximising the potential they have together to effectively advocate for improved access to healthcare in Latin America.

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Note to Editors:

About IAPO: IAPO is the only global alliance representing patients of all nationalities across all disease areas and promoting patient-centred healthcare worldwide. Our members are patients' organizations working at the local, national, regional and international levels to represent and support patients, their families and carers. IAPO's has 200 members which span over 40 countries and 50 disease areas and through membership represents an estimated 365 million patients worldwide.

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