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## Latin American Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (FLANC): Past, Present, and Future

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### INTRODUCTION

The American continent is divided into three distinctive geographic areas: North, Central, and South. Contrary to popular belief, North America includes three countries—Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico.

Latin America (Spanish: América Latina or Latinoamérica; Portuguese: América Latina; French: Amérique Latine) is a region of the Americas where Romance languages—particularly Spanish and Portuguese, and variably French—are primarily spoken. Latin America begins in Mexico and ends in the South Pole. It has an area of approximately 21,069,500 km<sup>2</sup> (7,880,000 sq miles), almost 3.9% of the Earth's surface or 14.1% of its land surface area. As of 2010, its population was estimated at more than 590 million (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**).

The development of neurosurgery in Latin America can be divided into three stages: first stage, from 1700 to 1900, when neurosurgery was carried out by general surgeons; second stage, from 1900 to 1930, when brain surgery was performed by general surgeons, especially devoted to the pathology of the nervous system; third stage, from 1930 to 1940, when neurosurgery was performed by neurosurgeons trained in Europe and the United States (1).



**Figure 1.** Map of Latin America.

### PAST

The first steps in the Organization of the Latin American Neurosurgery can be traced back to the half of the 20th century when in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1944, Alejandro Schröder, the Uruguayan neurosurgeon, and the famous Chilean neurosurgeon Alfonso

Asenjo joined their ideas and took the decision to establish an International Institution for the study, research, teaching, practice, and dissemination of brain surgery in South America (**Figures 2** and **3**).

### Key words

- Federation
- Latin America
- Neurosurgery

### Abbreviation and Acronyms

**AANS:** American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
**ASOCAN:** Association of Central American Countries of Neurosurgery  
**CLANC:** Latin American Congress of Neurosurgery  
**CNS:** Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
**FLANC:** Latin American Federation of Neurosurgical Societies



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Citation: *World Neurosurg.* (2012) 77, 3/4:414-418.

DOI: 10.1016/j.wneu.2011.07.020

Journal homepage: [www.WORLDNEUROSURGERY.org](http://www.WORLDNEUROSURGERY.org)

Available online: [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

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**Table 1.** Latin America Population and its Composition

Country	Population	Amerindians	Whites	Mestizos	Mulattos	Blacks	Creoles and Garifunas	Asians
Argentina	40,134,425	1.0%	85.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%
Bolivia	10,907,778	55.0%	15.0%	28.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Brazil	192,272,890	0.4%	53.8%	0.0%	39.1%	6.2%	0.0%	0.5%
Chile	17,063,000	8.0%	52.7%	39.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Colombia	45,393,050	1.3%	28.6%	49.2%	19.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Costa Rica	4,253,897	0.8%	82.0%	15.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.2%
Cuba	11,236,444	0.0%	37.0%	0.0%	51.0%	11.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Dominican Republic	8,562,541	0.0%	14.6%	0.0%	75.0%	7.7%	2.3%	0.4%
Ecuador	13,625,000	39.0%	9.9%	41.0%	5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.1%
El Salvador	6,134,000	8.0%	1.0%	91.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Guatemala	13,276,517	53.0%	4.0%	42.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.8%
Honduras	7,810,848	7.7%	1.0%	85.6%	1.7%	0.0%	3.3%	0.7%
Mexico	111,211,789	14.0% <sup>[34]</sup>	15.0%	70.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Nicaragua	5,891,199	6.9%	14.0%	78.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.2%
Panama	3,322,576	8.0%	10.0%	32.0%	27.0%	5.0%	14.0%	4.0%
Paraguay	6,349,000	1.5%	20.0%	74.5%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Peru	29,461,933	45.5%	12.0%	32.0%	9.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Puerto Rico	3,967,179	0.0%	74.8%	0.0%	10.0%	15.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Uruguay	3,494,382	0.0%	88.0%	8.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Venezuela	26,814,843	2.7%	16.9%	37.7%	37.7%	2.8%	0.0%	2.2%
Total	561,183,291	9.2%	36.1%	30.3%	20.3%	3.2%	0.2%	0.7%

Adapted from Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin\\_America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_America)).

These two neurosurgeons commented, “We set the initial landmark for all the future International Congresses of Neurosurgery.” Years later, this was confirmed by the Neurosurgery Professor Earl Walker from Johns Hopkins University, during his inaugural speech as President of the Fourth International Congress in New York.

After that decision, Drs. Ramón Carrillo and Rafael Babbini, from Argentina, and Dr. Eliseu Paglioli, from Brazil, joined and together became the First Permanent Committee and adopted the name South American Congress of Neurosurgery. The First Congress took place in November 1945 in Montevideo, Uruguay, with Dr. Alejandro Shröder as president.

In 1955, during the sixth South American Congress, again in Montevideo, Uruguay, the prominent Mexican neurosurgeon, Dr. Manuel Velasco Suárez, on behalf of all the Mesoamerican countries and the Caribbean, formalized the proposed change in the designation and radius of action, under the new name of Latin American Congress.

The Permanent Committee of the Congress was reinforced in 1955 by Dr. Ramón Arana (Uruguay) and in 1957 by Dr. Stephen Rocca (Peru). The era of the Latin American Congress of Neurosurgery (CLANC) started in 1957, in Medellín, Colombia. In 1959, Dr. Alfonso Asenjo, in his book *Neurosurgical Techniques*, wrote of the

CLANC as: “The first Congress with international character which was organized and continues to have its meetings regularly every two years is the Latin American Congress.” It is important to mention that in 1967, the Conference of the Hispano-Luso American Society of Neurosurgery, created in 1947, joined the Latin American Congress.

The 19th CLANC took place in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in 1981, consolidating the creation of the Latin American Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (FLANC) project, which had begun to take shape 2 years earlier during the 18th CLANC in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the support of its President Dr. José Benaim. This was later supported by future generations and their presidents, such as Drs. Hinojosa, Mangabeira, and Poblete.

Dr. Juan Mendoza Vega from Colombia was in charge of the coat of arms of our Federation (**Figure 4**).

Since its creation, there have been three defined stages:

1. South-American, from 1945 to 1955, known as South American Conference
2. Latin American, from 1957 to 1981, years in which the Latin American Federation of Neurosurgery was created.
3. Federative, from 1983 to the present.

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