

Spotlight on: Organisational management

In June 2018, Dr Ana Rodríguez Martinol, member of the Board of Directors of the [Comisión Honoraria de Lucha contra el Cáncer \(CHLCC\)](#) in Uruguay, visited the [Asociación Mexicana de Lucha contra el Cáncer A.C. \(AMLCC\)](#) in Mexico to learn about organisational management in a moment of change in CHLCC mission.



Ana is also head of the Public Education division at CHLCC, an organisation mandated by the Government of Uruguay to create nationwide public health programmes on cancer prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and

support. The Commission has traditionally focused on early detection and treatment through education and training initiatives. Having achieved progress in its activities since its creation, CHLCC is now looking to commit its efforts to prevention, including through promoting research.

Ana was awarded a [grant](#), sponsored by the [Prevent Cancer Foundation \(PCF\)](#), to visit AMLCC in Mexico. Similarly to CHLCC, AMLCC was founded by a request from the Mexican Ministry of Health in order to bring together entrepreneurs, doctors and funders. Their mission is to create awareness to promote early detection and prevent cancer throughout Mexico. Both Uruguay and Mexico are regional champions in cancer control, and this visit intended to build momentum and continuous collaboration throughout Latin America. The President of Uruguay is an oncologist by training and has spoken at the 2017 [World Leaders Cancer Summit \(WLCS\)](#) in Mexico. In turn, Mexico is strongly committed to have civil societies working together through the creation of a [national coalition](#), having hosted the 2017 WLCS, and now participating in UICC's [Treatment for All](#) initiative. Ana learned more about AMLCC at the [Leadership in Action meeting in Mexico](#) in 2017.

Since both organisations are government mandated and have similar objectives, Ana was inspired to visit AMLCC as CHLCC is going through a transition period to respond to the current reality in Uruguay, having agreed in a new [Strategic Plan for 2017-2021](#).

In line with the latter, the main objectives for Ana's visit were:

1. To learn about organisational management, focusing on funding and programme coordination.
2. To improve CHLCC's engagement and communication with national and international stakeholders, as well as with patients and broad community.



The visit

Ana's programme included:

- Meetings with AMLCC various departments, coordinated by Ms. Mayra Galindo, Executive Director of AMLCC. Ana met with education specialists, doctors, health technicians, and community mobilisers to learn about AMLCC's early diagnosis campaigns. She discussed how to support patients and advocate for public policy change and met with the communication and finance departments to learn how to best optimise social media, web pages and organisation branding, as well as how to fundraise.
- A visit to *Casa de Detección Oportuna* to get a sense of the organisation's hands-on work in the city.
- Visits to several other institutions throughout Mexico City to grow CHLCC's network of possible collaborating NGOs. For instance, she met with the director of the [Insituto Nacional de Cancerología \(INCan\)](#) and toured their facilities, as well as those of a national hospital, INCan, which is the main cancer treatment centre in Mexico, and [one of the best in Latin America](#). Additionally, she went to the [Centro de Cuidados Paliativos](#), where caregivers, nurses and other professionals are trained to provide palliative care

to cancer patients (an area CHLCC would like to grow), and [Casa de la Amistad](#), an NGO that provides accommodation to children from the interior of the country during their chemotherapy treatment in Mexico City.

- A press conference to launch the “[Joining Forces Against Prostate Cancer](#)” campaign at [Red de Acceso](#). Red de Acceso consults journalists, political scientists, and recent graduates on messaging and public policy advocacy, and Ana felt that this added significantly to the positive outcomes of their advocacy campaigns.
- Participation in a session of the “National Access Board,” which brings together several institutions that work for the prevention and early diagnosis of chronic NCDs and advocates for changes in public policies.

Moving forward

Ana’s take-aways from her experience was shared with the rest of the Commission upon her return. It was agreed that **many of the projects that Ana was exposed to during her time in Mexico could be integrated into CHLCC programming, coordination and communication strategy, and its reorganisation.**



One of these programmes is educating community leaders, usually women, on health promotion tools, risk factors and early detection, and eradicating myths about cancer. These leaders then go on to organise community activities

to educate others throughout Mexico and encourage individuals to go to check ups and live healthy lives. Several NGOs she visited, as well as AMLCC, also carry out workshops with patients and caregivers to improve wellness, including self-image, nutrition, particularly when undergoing chemotherapy, psychosocial support, and positive coping mechanisms.

Lastly, she learned many communication concepts, such as creating a newsletter with healthy lifestyle, prevention and detection tips, and enabling the AMLCC website with a messaging feature to respond to queries and provide further information. Ana said that **“The impact of the visit was very positive. We will study the possibility of replicating and applying some of the experiences highlighted, according to our reality”.**



“CHLCC must continue working according to the country’s priorities, but have its own agenda, consolidating its position as adviser to health authorities, maintaining the trust generated up to now in the community, and updating its forms of communication with campaigns capable of influencing the whole community. There is a new social reality, which requires changes in actions.”

Ana’s visit will have lasting benefits for CHLCC, Uruguay, and might inspire regional collaborations. She has established a significant relationship with AMLCC, INCAN, and the other NGOs. As an example, INCAN is interested in

improving Mexican records of cancer incidence and mortality, and CHLCC has many years of experience working with the Uruguay national cancer registry. They hope to collaborate on this initiative and invite a doctor from INCAN to CHLCC. Additionally, Ana intends to create a network of organisations that are working on early detection and prevention, through which they can share resources, needs and advice.

Ana’s visit responds to [Treatment for All](#)’s aim of improving access to cancer services, with emphasis on early diagnosis and treatment.

Keep up with [CHLCC](#), and learn more about UICC regional capacity building programmes [here](#).