



**AMERICAN
SOCIETY FOR
MICROBIOLOGY**

MEDIA INFORMATION

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American Society for Microbiology Partners with Peruvian University to Strengthen Infectious Disease Diagnosis in Resource- Limited Countries

WASHINGTON, DC – July 24, 2009 -- On July 9, 2009 in Lima, Peru, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia (UPCH) formalizing a relationship designed to help strengthen laboratory diagnosis of infectious diseases in resource-limited and transitional countries.

In the world's richest countries, infectious diseases now account for only one out of 10 deaths, yet in resource-limited countries six in 10 still die of infectious diseases, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Half of these deaths could be prevented.

ASM, through its International Laboratory Capacity Building (LabCap) Program, under the governance of the LabCap Committee housed within the ASM International Board, is ensuring the quality-assured implementation of new and existing diagnostic tools in resource-limited countries through onsite training and technical assistance. For this purpose, ASM is strengthening clinical microbiology laboratories by mobilizing its members to build human resource capacity for laboratory diagnosis of infectious diseases.



Left to right: Jose Chauca, Lily Schuermann, Steven Specter, Palmira Ventosilla, Eduardo Gotuzzo, and Humberto Guerra Allison

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UPCH, located in Lima, Peru, is a Center of Excellence, housing state-of-the-art laboratories with adequate infrastructure, scientists and microbiologists with field-tested expertise in implementing quality-assured diagnoses of infectious diseases of worldwide distribution.



Keith Klugman, ASM International Board Chair, and Fabiola León-Velarde, Rector of UPCH, signing the MOU

“The MOU that has been signed with ASM should stimulate us at UPCH to improve all our laboratory and teaching skills in microbiology, and streamline them to be able to provide better service to underprivileged areas, not only in our own country and in South America, but also in other continents. We have an extraordinary chance, by working with ASM, to make us better at pursuing the goals of every university, in teaching, research and service to the community,” says Humberto Guerra Allison, Vice Rector of Research at UPCH.

This MOU will facilitate the development of integrated and multidisciplinary infectious disease diagnosis knowledge-transfer exchanges among and between Peruvian and international microbiologists. It will foster the sharing of evaluated, culturally appropriate, highly effective strategies and programs between researchers in transitional countries and resource-limited countries in the Southern Hemisphere (South-to-South collaborations). It will also facilitate the training of Northern microbiologists (from USA and Canada) on international standards for public health laboratory networks and on culturally appropriate strategies for implementing infectious disease diagnostics in resource-limited countries, in order to continue to expand a cadre of high-level microbiologist mentors for Lab Cap Program countries.

“This MOU is an extraordinary opportunity not only to strengthen ties between ASM members in the Americas, but also to build South-to-South collaboration between microbiologists in Peru and in Africa,” say Keith Klugman, Chair of the ASM International Board.

The ASM was represented by Klugman, Steven Specter, Lily Schuermann and Mah-Sere Keita Sow. UPCH was represented by Fabiola León-Velarde, Rector of UPCH; Guerra Allison; Jose Chauca; Eduardo Gotuzzo and Palmira Ventosilla.

More information on the MOU and the ASM LabCap Program can be found online at <http://www.labcap.org>.

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The American Society for Microbiology, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is the largest single life science association, with 42,000 members worldwide. Its members work in educational, research, industrial, and government settings on issues such as the environment, the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, laboratory and diagnostic medicine, and food and water safety. The ASM's mission is to gain a better understanding of basic life processes and to promote the application of this knowledge for improved health and economic and environmental well-being. For more information, please visit: <http://www.asm.org/>.

UPCH is a pluralist non profit private institution, open to its students and the social community, committed with the development of the country, efficiently related with the State and the civil society, specially through its essential functions, teaching, service, research and the diffusion of culture and knowledge in the fields of its competence: health, education, science and technology; it is committed to excellence and seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between academic excellence, social responsibility and institutional strengthening.