



“Let me tell you the story of how *the Penta Experience* changed the model of HIV care in Central America.”





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“Learning to implement solutions with the available resources.”

It all started in October 2005, when three paediatric ID specialists from Panama, Ecuador and El Salvador were invited to participate in the first Tr@inforPedHIV course in Rome.

The relatively small numbers of paediatric HIV cases in Latin America, in the global context of the adult pandemic, caused children to be neglected and left paediatricians in a very isolated situation. Latin America, especially Central America, is a region where the cohorts of paediatric patients are small, and isolated in each of the different countries' health facilities, with scarce access to resources and technical advice.

It was with funding from the Italian Government and the advice of the Penta group that in 2008 the first Latin American Tr@inforPedHIV course was held in El Salvador. By bringing together the paediatricians and paediatric ID, as well as other professionals taking care of the paediatric HIV patients in the region, we were able to understand the individual efforts of each centre and the need to work together.

This inspired us to expand the experience to the rest of Latin America, and the creation of a collaborative partnership that we later called the **Pediatric Latin American Network for Treatment of Aids** or “PLANTA”.

Since 2005, a total of nine courses have been held throughout the region - expanding technical capacity throughout the Americas. “The Penta experience” not only changed the provision of care to paediatric HIV patients in El Salvador, but also improved the quality of care in Central America, by unifying the region in a group sharing experiences and knowledge.

Over the years we have grown with our Penta colleagues, implementing new concepts and techniques, becoming more efficient in managing the health of our children. The cumulative experience of teachers and local providers has been essential for generations of knowledge in our countries, and the friendship forged over the years between European and Latin-American paediatricians has had an impact not only in the area of HIV, but more generally in children's health.

For El Salvador, the experience gained over the years working with the Penta community has shaped the practice of caring for children with HIV, learning to implement solutions with the available resources.