



AFSM INFO AOMS

Association of Former WHO staff Members / Association des Anciens de l'OMS

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Dear Members,

Until now, we have used the *Quarterly News* (QNT) as the only means of communicating with you. While you all appreciate the QNT, its quarterly publication makes it unsuitable for urgent issues. For this reason we have decided to create a new information bulletin "AFSM INFO AOMS"¹ to keep you informed of important developments as and when they occur. This first issue is devoted to Staff Health Insurance (SHI).

Proposed reform of SHI: What is the AFSM Executive Committee doing?

In March, we sent you a circular letter explaining the views of your Committee on a petition which was circulated earlier. Many of you, while expressing support for the Committee, were intrigued by the debate but felt that we did not explain clearly enough the issues at stake.

What are the issues at stake?

1. A most significant reform of the **SHI governance** is currently being reviewed. The proposal put forward by the Administration would completely change the way the SHI is governed and the decision-making mechanisms. In particular, it would replace the regional structures by a global structure. The original proposal substantially reduced the number of active and retired staff representatives as well as regional representatives (staff and Administration) involved in taking decisions on important issues affecting participants in the SHI.
The AFSM Executive Committee exercised its responsibility in examining these proposals and in conveying its recommendations to the Administration. As a result, the original proposal has been modified to take into account some of the Executive Committee's recommendations. This means that the membership of the proposed global committees has been revised so that parity between voting members of Administration and staff has been achieved. The AFSM Executive Committee representative is participating in the discussions on other ongoing issues within the Working Group which was established to review governance and other aspects of the SHI, bearing in mind that we are all working for a common cause (the welfare of our SHI).
2. **Financial matters** related to SHI are also under review at this time. The latest report of the Actuary will soon be presented to the HQ Surveillance Committee and to the SHI Working Group. Decisions related to the level of contributions and benefits will have to be taken in the light of the latest actuarial projections.
3. The AFSM Executive Committee has contributed to the study currently being undertaken by the SHI Working Group on the subject of **Long-term Care (LTC)**. The AFSM Executive Committee members have expressed a desire for better coverage of home care. Insurance coverage of the non-medical aspects of LTC could be extremely costly and adequate control of claims has to be guaranteed. Ways and means of financing such a benefit must also be examined.

1. In order to save costs, we would like to use email as much as possible for the distribution of the new information bulletin. For those of you who have email addresses but have not yet shared them with us, we look forward to hearing from you - kindly send your email address details to aoms@who.int

How well does the AFSM Executive Committee work with the Administration?

Without the slightest hesitation, we can say that we have excellent relationships with members of the Administration. The Administration is always ready to listen and to try to find solutions for individual cases and issues raised by the AFSM Executive Committee in matters related to SHI and Pensions. Our representatives on committees (including SHI and Pensions) are very active in defending the rights and concerns of former staff.

AFSM is composed of members all over the world. How does the AFSM Executive Committee work with Regional associations and Regional Surveillance Committees?

In view of the important issues currently being discussed, the AFSM Executive Committee has, over several months, been in very close contact with other WHO retired staff associations and retired staff representatives in the Regions. We have engaged very actively in discussions and in sharing their views by email and teleconferencing. These associations and representatives have outlined their respective positions in writing. We have now agreed to try to reach a common position. We believe that we will have a stronger voice if we convey the same message.

Is the issue of selecting the representatives of retirees of immediate concern?

The method of designating representatives of retired staff has not yet been decided upon. There are two different points of view on this matter.

Some are of the opinion that the representatives of retired staff must be elected without distinction from the entire group of retired staff who are SHI participants around the world ("at large"). Others feel that they should be from SHI participants who are members of AFSM, preferably from among the Executive Committee members whom you have elected, at HQ and also from the Regions as they may have specific needs. We feel that this second option is preferable for the following reasons:

1. AFSM members have always shown interest in the problems of retired staff, which is not necessarily the case of a representative "at large" who may have never bothered to show such interest.
2. AFSM members can influence their representatives by expressing their opinion and by monitoring their work, providing input and ensuring feedback through the Executive Committee. The entire Committee is there to defend your interests and to support the representative. How to provide support and input to, and ensure feedback from, a representative "at large" is less obvious.

In addition to this bulletin you will find two articles about SHI finance and governance in the forthcoming QNT. Your reactions will be very welcome.

Please continue to write to us. Your views are important and help us to work in your interest. We shall keep you informed of further developments.
