In the late 1970s the Mexican government proposed a poverty alleviation program that would focus on the health of the nation’s poor and rural. Though poverty alleviation projects were not new, the focus on health was a novel approach for Mexico because it challenged how policy makers and local officials understood poverty and health. A tenet of the program, for example, was to rely on the wealth of local healing practices, especially in resource scarce areas, and insure that physicians interacted with local healers. Dr Soto Laveaga’s presentation examines the social origins of the rural health care program, its immediate challenges and surprising successes, and its untimely demise linked to 1980s global economic reforms.

Dr. Amalia Del Riego will discuss the issue with reference to the Region of the Americas, highlighting recent efforts for health systems transformation to expand coverage of services and improve health systems performance, based on the renewed commitment to Primary Health Care. She will also discuss the challenges and opportunities, in the context of the commitment of Member States with Universal Health Coverage.

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