

A preface to the keynote and accepted abstracts of the Joint 9th World Alliance for Risk Factor Surveillance (WARFS) and 12th Americas' Network for Chronic Disease Surveillance (AMNET) 2015 Conference, November 18th-20th, 2015, St. John's, Antigua

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It is a pleasure to introduce the abstracts arising from the Joint World Alliance for Risk Factor Surveillance (WARFS) and Americas' Network for Chronic Disease Surveillance (AMNET) conference held in Antigua during November 18th-20th, 2015. This was a global conference on risk factor surveillance for public health. This conference was particularly notable because it combined three organizations concerned with public health. First, the host of the conference, the American University of Antigua College of Medicine; second, the World Alliance of Risk Factor Surveillance, a group affiliated with the Paris-based International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE); and third, Americas' Network for Chronic Disease Surveillance. Thus it was subtitled the Joint 9th WARFS Global Conference and 12th AMNET Conference 2015. Both surveillance groups WARFS and AMNET had their historical origins at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Over the years, since the first global meeting on behavioral risk-factor surveillance held in the Atlanta, GA USA area, these two institutions have developed and held meetings focusing on issues in risk factor

surveillance. Historically there have been keen discussions, keynotes, presentations, and posters on such topics as the theory of surveillance, the incorporation of social factors into the surveillance, the ever arising methodological and technical challenges, and the global importance of good data to inform decision making and policy taking with regard to major public health issues. The Antigua conference touched on all these issues and the abstracts within this volume represent this diversity of topics. Of particular note was the chance for a small Caribbean country to be a part of this global discussion and it illustrates that the importance of risk factor surveillance is not confined just to larger economically highly developed nations. It is also notable because the previous WARFS-IUHPE Conference in 2013 was held in Beijing, China. Nonetheless, despite the obvious difference in venue and country size, the discussions were just as globally relevant and pertinent to today's global concerns. Therefore, as the editors of this special issue, we are pleased to present the abstracts that represent the 2015 Antigua Conference.

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