

# GLOBAL HEALTH HISTORIES SEMINARS

## 100 Years of Chagas Disease: A Continuing Public Health Challenge



Professor Simone Kropf

Chagas disease, caused by a parasite transmitted by a blood-sucking insect, affects an estimated 10 million people in the Americas today, and causes over 10 000 deaths every year. In recent years international travel and migration of populations has led to cases in countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States.

Historian Professor Simone Kropf of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, describes how it was first identified in 1909 by Brazilian physician Carlos Chagas, and became a major public health problem during the 20th century. The new ailment was characterized as 'the disease of Brazil', symbolic of a 'diseased country'. It was also an example of how Brazilian scientists contributed original knowledge to the world of tropical medicine, stirring continuing debates about the relationships between diseases, poverty and national identity. Professor Kropf's presentation marks the 100th anniversary of discovery of the disease, traces its history and offers new insights into the complex relations between science, public health and society.

Her co-speaker is Professor Gabriel Adrián Schmunis, formerly of the Communicable Diseases Unit of the WHO American Regional Office in Washington, DC. He will discuss the current global status of the disease and efforts to interrupt vector transmission in some countries in South and Central America.

Co-organized with The Wellcome Trust; the Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London; the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine at the University of Oxford, together with the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, and the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases at WHO.

Contact: Hooman Momen, Coordinator WHO Press, **Department of Knowledge Management and Sharing (KMS)**  
+41 22 791 1162 (momenh@who.int). Website: [http://www.who.int/global\\_health\\_histories/en/](http://www.who.int/global_health_histories/en/)



Professor Gabriel Adrián Schmunis