

ACP Central America Chapter Annual Meeting 2026
February 6-7, 2026
Panama City, Panama
ACP Global Ambassador reflections by: Rebecca A. Andrews, MD, MACP

The ACP Central America Chapter Annual Meeting was held February 6–7, 2026, in Panama City, Panama. The Global Engagement team, including Amanda Gogno and Wendy Rivera-Craig, provided excellent preparation in advance, ensuring a seamless arrival and warm welcome from chapter leadership. Chapter leadership graciously hosted the meeting at the Hotel Riu Plaza Panama, which also served as our lodging from February 5 to 8. The shared venue created many opportunities for informal conversations and connection with speakers, attendees, and chapter leaders throughout the visit.

My husband, Kevin Chamberlin, accompanied me during the social events and meeting. Although he initially worried that his limited Spanish might make interactions difficult, the extraordinary hospitality of the attendees quickly put those concerns to rest. Many colleagues intentionally engaged him in English, reflecting the warmth and inclusiveness that characterized the entire meeting.

The chapter typically schedules its annual meeting during Panama’s dry season, known for favorable weather. Many apologized for the uncharacteristic lack of sun but remarked on our luck to come during the dry season with low humidity. Humidity (like all things) is relative to your norm. Although our arrival from the cold northeastern United States coincided with several overcast days, the mild temperatures and welcoming atmosphere more than compensated for the lack of sunshine.

On our first evening, we attended dinner with Dr. Jose Francéschi, Governor of the Central America Chapter; his wife Judith; several previous Governors; and three of the conference speakers at ACHA, Costa del Este. Panama has several restaurants on the “50 Best” list for Latin America, and although this was not listed, it certainly did not disappoint. The warmth and hospitality continued with dinner attendees in our corner of the table sharing their food so that we could taste many regional flavors. The degree of camaraderie and fellowship struck me.

Dr. Francéschi introduced me throughout events and at the opening remarks. I was moved at his purposeful description of me as a strong female leader and a role model he hoped would help increase women physician leadership in their chapter. As the first female Governor of my own state chapter, I know that such an initiative requires the recognition and appreciation of a “he for she” champion to lead the change. This theme recurred throughout my visit, illustrating the intention with which the leadership is growing the chapter’s future membership.

When I arrived, I was requested to give any remarks in Spanish. Spanish is a second language for me, and I initially felt hesitant given the importance of my remarks to the chapter. However, the appreciation from the audience each time I did was well worth any grammatical missteps. My

presentations were both in English, but had I realized the impact of those remarks in Spanish, I would have reworked my presentation in Spanish. Although not an expectation of guests, I would encourage future officers to consider this on any travels to countries they are able to speak the national language.

The Central America Chapter Meeting had speakers from several countries. The topics of focus were timely with artificial intelligence (AI) and ethics, heart failure, application of AI to clinical reasoning, and emerging infectious diseases. My first talk covered a primary care approach to genetic cancers, which was much appreciated by the oncology attendees, as this is an area that they feel primary care could grow. The second day, I provided an update on vaccine recommendations, also touching on the U.S. process of determining guidelines, a history on the distrust of vaccines in the United States, and the great advocacy work of ACP.

All of the speakers were engaging, with robust questions on the topics presented. We found surprising interest in Kevin's role as a PharmD in our team-based care as well as his role in health care management. Team-based care, expanding primary care diagnostic and treatment breadth, ethical use of AI, and chapter engagement fueled many conversations during our visit. Devices were provided to translate my talks, and Kevin used one for the presentations in Spanish. We later discovered there was someone doing live translation, solving the mystery of instantaneous, accurate translation.

The town hall was an intimate setting with the leaders of the chapter (past and present) alongside early career and resident leaders. The discussion was robust and quite similar to other town halls I have attended. The chapter has been innovative in their ability to obtain unique sponsorship for their meeting, and I took home a few ideas for our state chapter. There was a request for an ACP leadership update after the town hall, which happened before the second day of presentations. There was no unaccounted time to provide this; however, I did offer to do so in a future webinar. One theme interwoven from the first dinner through my stay was the respect for the meaning behind FACP and MACP designation. It was humbling and inspiring.

The chapter has strong ties to Colombia, Mexico, and the United States, which seems to support the continued interest and growth in ACP membership. I was most impressed with the push to recruit the new generations of physicians and promote women, as it reflected a strong understanding of what the future of medicine and membership would need. Chapter leaders acknowledged that there is a higher capacity for recruitment in countries where the ACP chapter and the internal medicine association(s) are in alignment. The chapter leaders have been true ambassadors for ACP, traveling to other countries on their own funds and using personal time to share the message of ACP membership benefits. I commended the remarkable growth of the chapter through these actions and the development of their Doctor's Dilemma® competition, which has been successful in attracting more junior members. The chapter already plans to trial something similar with the medical students.

There was some time to see the beauty of Panama outside of the hotel. Kevin and I timed our visit to the Panama Canal perfectly to avoid the long lines that we saw when leaving. On Saturday, once the conference ended, we were taken into the old city for lunch and a little sightseeing. Pictured below is a location that contains the absolute best passion fruit ice cream I have had. We were able to watch part of a wedding and a young woman being photographed for her quinceañera and viewed the local hospitals on our return drive. I did not have time built into our trip on the weekday for an inside tour of the hospitals and clinics but would encourage future visitors to request this if there is time.

On our last night, we had a phenomenal meal at Maito, one of the top 50 restaurants. Dr. Francéschi and Judith collected us at the hotel personally for an evening of excellent food, good discussion, and warm fellowship. We discussed governments, medicine, the history of Panama, and the country's pride with the success of the Panama Canal. During our stay, I was able to reconnect with several physicians I had previously met, including Dr. Eric Ulloa, who was a Governor during my time as the Connecticut Governor. I also feel blessed to have created a new listing of colleagues from Panama, Mexico, and Colombia.

Skill in creating lasting connections is a gift. I believe it is the community of ACP that retains members and strengthens forward movement of medicine. These beliefs were strengthened during my visit to the Central America Chapter Meeting. Since our return, we have exchanged social messages as well as presentations, and I believe Kevin and Dr. Nick Tarazona (a speaker from Colombia) plan to do an article on AI in pharmacy. What a perfect outcome to an ambassador trip! I conclude this report with the assessment of a clear value of the ACP Global Ambassadors Program and hope it continues.



