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Dr. Chaves completed her medical degree in Brazil. After a few years of clinical practice, she started her career in infectious disease and epidemiology. She worked for Doctors Without Borders-Holland for almost 2 years, during which time she lived in the Amazon jungle working with isolate indigenous tribes and dealing with a broad spectrum of infectious diseases, including malaria, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and yellow fever. In 1997, Dr. Chaves completed a Master of Science in Communicable Disease Epidemiology degree program from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Following this, Dr Chaves worked as a medical epidemiologist in various international settings including Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, East Timor, and The Netherlands, both at local and national levels, through which she has acquired extensive practical experience in public health, working with WHO and other governmental organizations.

In 2002, Dr. Chaves joined the former National Immunization Program at CDC, and she has since worked with viral vaccine preventable diseases and has been the author or co-author of more than 50 papers and book chapters. Currently Dr. Chaves works at the Influenza Division as the Medical Director for the Influenza Hospitalization Surveillance Network (FluSurv-NET) that monitors influenza hospitalizations in 14 states in the United States.