

Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit



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The Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit of the Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is issued with the purpose of informing about important advances, news and publications in the areas of mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, rehabilitation and the protection of human rights within this context. In particular, the Bulletin focuses on those activities related to the technical assistance provided by PAHO/WHO to different actors in the Region. We hope it will become a useful tool for all those working in this important field of public health all over the Americas.

The Unit Team

NEW!!!

Information Section about Mental Health on PAHO's Website:



Mental Health in the Americas. A Mental Reform
(In Spanish only)

*Extract from an interview to Dr. Jorge Rodríguez
Chief of PAHO's Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit*

Mental Health in Latin America and the Caribbean

Despite the constant efforts of all the countries in the Americas to improve their mental health services since the 60's and 70's, the initiatives have been mostly local and isolated and have not reached a regional consensus or faced the challenges of reform in a structural and integrated manner.

In the last years, a group of countries from Latin America and the Caribbean have distinguished themselves for their valuable experiences. The Panamerican Health Organization (PAHO), as advisor and catalyst, has facilitated a fruitful discussion and offered them continuous technical assistance. PAHO's Technical Cooperation has significantly strengthened the countries' capacity for response concerning the promotion of mental health and the prevention and treatment of psychiatric disorders. Thanks to PAHO's support, many member countries are now providing their health systems and networks with greater content and proactivity in the field of mental health.

More information>>

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WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, 10 October 2007

Mental Health in a Changing World: The Impact of Culture and Diversity
World Federation for Mental Health

Culture may influence many aspects of mental health, including how individuals from a given culture communicate and manifest their symptoms, their style of coping, their family and community supports, and their willingness to seek treatment. Likewise, the cultures of the clinician and the service system influence diagnosis, treatment, and service delivery. Cultural and social influences are not the only determinants of mental illness and patterns of service use, but they do play important roles.

In the mental health care setting, culture impacts how people: label and communicate distress, explain the causes of mental health problems, perceive mental health providers, utilize and respond to mental health treatment.

How can we move forward and give the best care possible if we don't take into consideration the differences of those we are trying to help? How do we overcome the barriers of language and cultural differences, views of mental illness, gender issues, and different training and teaching methods? The 2007 World Mental Health Day Campaign will bring attention to transcultural mental health services and treatment.

Sub-Regional Meeting of Mental Health Stakeholders in the English-Speaking Caribbean Countries Barbados, 26-27 July 2007

It was organized by the Office of the Caribbean Program Coordination (CPC) and PAHO/WHO's Mental Health Unit. Twenty mental health professionals from sixteen countries of the Sub-region participated in the activity, as well as a representative from CARICOM. The aims of the meeting were the following:

- To review the overall mental health (MH) current situation and identify constraints and positive factors in the implementation of previous MH plans, at a national and sub-regional level;
- To agree on a process to finalize a mental health strategic framework for the Sub-region;
- To identify the way forward for the implementation of national MH plans, paying attention to the MH component in Primary Health Care (PHC), the decentralization of MH services, human resources and information systems;
- To start the evaluation of MH Systems in the Sub-region using WHO's assessment tool (WHO-AIMS).

The opening remarks were made by Dr. Bernardette Gandi (CPC). Among other participants who made presentations were: Dr. Jorge Rodriguez (Chief of Mental Health/PAHO), Ms. Sandra Plummer, Deputy Program Manager of Health Sector Development, CARICOM, Mr. Javier Vásquez (Legal Unit/PAHO), Mrs. Dévora Kestel (Subregional Advisor/PAHO), Dr. Margaret Hazlewood (Consultant/ PAHO) and Dr. Wendel Abel (UWI).

Both, the presenters and the participants, agreed that MH was one of the main priorities identified in the Sub-region and emphasized the need to draw up a common MH framework (aligned to the Caribbean Cooperation for Health III, where MH is one of the eight priorities) and to develop a Regional Mental Health Strategy, which will not only consider the clinical aspects but also the relationship between MH and other social issues. The subject of Human Rights and existing Legislation in the Region, as well as the assessment tool WHO-AIMS, were also dealt with. Examples of four "best practices" were presented by the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica and Jamaica to promote them as a model to be used by other countries under similar conditions. It was agreed that a final version of the Regional Framework will be presented during the next Caucus Meeting, which will be followed by a Strategy addressing the main issues to be considered for the Sub-region.

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Subregional Workshop on Rehabilitation and Social Support to People with Severe Mental Disorder Guatemala City, 25-27 June 2007

It was promoted by PAHO/WHO's Regional Mental Health Unit and coordinated by the Representation in Guatemala. Fifty mental health (MH) specialists from different countries of Central America, the Hispanic Caribbean, Mexico and Venezuela participated in the meeting, which was organized with the support of "Fundación Andaluza para la Integración del Enfermo Mental" (FAISEM), who sent Dr. Marcelino López, expert and facilitator of the workshop.

The following objectives were pursued:

1. To sensitize or raise awareness about the utility and feasibility of rehabilitation and social integration programs and services for people with severe mental disorders.
2. To provide technical and theoretical input about the main programs and types of services based on international information and Andalusia's concrete experience.
3. To facilitate individual and collective reflection on possible strategies for the development of these programs and services in the Subregion.

Dr. Armando Vásquez, Regional Advisor for Rehabilitation and Disability, gave a lecture on "Disability in the Americas" and provided information regarding the regional situation and about the epidemiology of disability. Dr. Victor Aparicio, PAHO/WHO'S Subregional Advisor for Mental Health for Central America, the Hispanic Caribbean and Mexico, described the situation of MH in Central America in light of WHO-AIMS, the data collection tool developed by the World Health Organization, giving information on the results of the report concerning MH systems in the Subregion. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Dr. Alejandra Flores, Coordinator of Guatemala's National Program of Mental Health, was invited to share with the participants the "2007-2020 Strategic Plan for the Promotion of MH". She stressed the importance of integrating the community approach to MH care and rehabilitation.



The Workshop was divided into five modules:

1. Contextual Aspects:
 - Community assistance to people with severe mental disorders
 - Psychosocial rehabilitation: philosophy, strategy, programs and services
 - Rehabilitation programs and social support in Andalusia
2. Basic rehabilitation programs
3. Residential programs
4. Employment support programs
5. Other social support programs

Each module had a theoretical component and group debate, as well as presentations and discussion in plenary sessions. The Workshop also promoted the analysis and discussion of Dr. Marcelino Lopez's experience to evaluate the feasibility of its implementation in the context of the different participating countries, taking into consideration certain concrete proposals.



www.psiquiatriasur.cl
(In Spanish only)



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Coming EVENTS

-World Mental health Congress, "Impact of Culture on Mental Health: East meets West", Hong Kong SAR China, 19-23 August, 2007. www.wmhc2007.com

-WPA Regional Meeting Shanghai, China 20-23 September, 2007. <http://www.wpa2007shanghai.com>

-WPA Regional Meeting Buenos Aires, Argentina XIV Congress of the Argentinean Association of Psychiatrists, 24-27 September, 2007. <http://www.aap.org.ar>

-WFSAD 2007 International Conference - Lighting the Path: Hope in Action. Toronto Canada, 28-30 September, 2007. <http://www.world-schizophrenia.org/>

-20th Annual USA Psychiatric and Mental Health Congress Orlando, Florida, USA, 11-14 October, 2007. www.emellc.com/psychcongress

-WPA International Congress, "Working Together for Mental Health: Partnerships for Policy and Practice", Melbourne, Australia, 28 Nov.-2 Dec., 2007.

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Information about Activities in Argentina from PAHO's Regional Office

PAHO's Subregional Advisor for Mental Health, Dr. Hugo Cohen, informs that the creation of an "Intersectoral Work Team" was promoted within the framework of Argentina's Mental Health National Plan (Resolution 245/98). This team consists of representatives from the Mental Health Area of the National Ministry of Health and from the Secretariat for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice, with the articulation of PAHO/WHO as supplier of technical and financial support.

The "National Board on Mental Health, Justice and Human Rights" was created as from the activities of the above mentioned team. It incorporated other social actors, such as provincial and local authorities, hospital directors, family associations and NGOs, with the aim of facilitating the articulation between sectors, who, although working on the same problems every day, they seldom get together to coordinate their actions. This is mainly achieved through the organization of "Regional Workshops", where representatives from other institutions of the community are also invited to participate: provincial secretariats for HHRR, public defenders, municipalities, the police, the penitentiary service, educational institutions, workers, universities, churches, etc. Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, Chief of PAHO's Mental Health Unit, and Mr. Javier Vásquez (PAHO/Legal Unit) have attended both, Board meetings and Workshops.

The workshops include presentations by experts, group work and plenary discussions, with the aim of reaching consensus and producing a set of conclusions and final recommendations, which will help establish intersectoral boards at a regional and local level. Experts base their presentations on PAHO/WHO's principles, as well as on the International Agreements, Treaties and Protocols on Human Rights and Mental Health signed by the country. The final objective is to achieve better health care services for people who suffer from mental disorders and their families, by promoting their social inclusion, their non-discrimination and the respect for their civil rights. Five workshops, with 280 participants, have been run in different regions of Argentina: Northwest; Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires; Province of Buenos Aires; Cuyo and Patagonia. Another two workshops are planned to be held this year in the Central and Northeast regions.

El Salvador:

Mental Health Draft Bill

The National Council for Mental Health, based in the National Secretariat for Family Affairs, has promoted the preparation of a Mental Health Draft Bill preliminary document, which was produced with the participation of different social actors and has incorporated both, the gender and the human rights approaches. PAHO is providing technical support to this project.

Dominican Republic, Honduras and Costa Rica:

WHO-AIMS Data collection concluded

These three countries have finished gathering data through the World Health Organization Assessment Instrument (WHO-AIMS). The technical reports will be prepared shortly, thus completing the information already available from Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. A Subregional meeting to analyze this data is planned to be held next September.

World Suicide Prevention Day: "Suicide Prevention across the Life Span"

10 September, 2007

Sponsored by the International Association for Suicide Prevention, in collaboration with WHO

Second IASSID South America Regional Conference

"Human Rights and Intellectual Disabilities - A Matter for All", Santiago, Chile, 4-6 September, 2007

With the sponsorship of the Pan American Health Organization, IASSID Sudamérica, IASSID and DSI have organized this two-day Regional Conference, which will be held at the School of Law of the Universidad Diego Portales of Santiago de Chile. Key speakers from Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, Ireland, Italy, France, the UK, Canada, Spain and the USA will cover a range of lifespan issues related to human rights, services, and cutting edge research. [More information>>](#)

IASSID -The International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities-