



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

**MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES
AND
REHABILITATION
BULLETIN**

August 2008

Regional Workshop sponsored by PAHO/WHO: The Current Situation of epilepsy in Latin America and the Caribbean, Challenges and Prospects

A regional workshop on epilepsy cosponsored by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of the World Health Organization (WHO), the International League Against Epilepsy (ILA) and the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) took place in Tegucigalpa, Honduras from 20- 22 August 2008.



Those in attendance at the opening session included Dr. Lilian Reneau-Vernon, representative of PAHO/WHO in Honduras, Dr. Jorge Rodriguez, Project Coordinator of Mental Health PAHO/WHO headquarters in Washington, D. C. and other officials from the Ministry of Public Health of Honduras.

Participants worked for three days discussing regional issues and experiences and the best strategies suited to dealing with epilepsy.

As part of this activity, on 20 August, the Report on Regional Epilepsy was formally presented. It is a technical paper on the status of epilepsy that was prepared by the Pan American Health Organization, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International League Against Epilepsy (ILA) and the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE); Dr. Carlos Acevedo was coordinator.

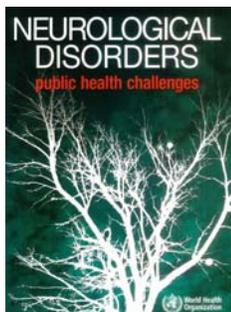
This is a disorder that affects approximately 5 million citizens, but as the report shows 60% of them are not diagnosed or do not have access to services and appropriate treatments. These figures clearly show that we are facing a public health problem of the utmost importance. Other than the prevalence of the disease one of the most important problems is the stigma attached to patients, which is an obstacle to their rights and social integration. As a result, we are faced with a disease that is a global burden with many gaps and shortcomings in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Mental Health at PAHO / WHO hopes that the disclosure of this document will contribute to better understanding this problem and will lead to solutions in the regional context of the countries.

The challenges of epilepsy, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's....

Neurological disorders: a serious challenge to public health in the Americas and around the world

Washington, D. C., 25 August, 2008 (PAHO) - Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO/PAHO) claim that if we do not act on a global scale in an immediate way, the future burden of neurological diseases can become an uncontrollable problem and become one of the biggest threats to global public health.



Neurological disorders such as epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, and some of the other conditions that cause impairments and neurological deterioration already account for more than 6% of the global burden of disease. Fifty million people worldwide suffer from epilepsy, and future projections indicate that the numbers of individuals affected by dementia will double every 20 years.

"The burden of neurological disorders is reaching significant proportions in countries where the proportion of people are over 65 years," says Dr. Rita Levi-Montalcini, Nobel Prize for Medicine 1986, in his foreword to "Neurological Disorders: Challenges for Public Health". According to Dr. Levi-Montalcini, these first years of the third millennium require a much better understanding of the brain and neuro-developmental disorders due to prolonged ageing of populations.

The translation, editing and publication in Spanish of this new book was done by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The official launch of the play took place last Wednesday, 20 August in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

The book was launched in connection with the opening of a regional workshop on epilepsy sponsored by PAHO/WHO and the Government of Honduras. His presentation was given by Dr. Jose Bertolote, WHO consultant, who had coordinated the work of preparing the work.

The presentation was attended by a group of professionals in the field of neurology and mental health from Honduras and other Latin American countries. Also in the activity was Dr. Lilian Reneau-Vernon, Representative of PAHO/WHO in Honduras, Dr. Jorge Rodriguez, Project Coordinator of Mental Health PAHO/WHO headquarters in Washington and officials of the Ministry of Public Health in Honduras.

Systematization of knowledge

Experts from PAHO are confident that this publication will serve as theoretical support to improve health services that are offered to people carrying neurological disorders, in parallel with progress in the development of effective interventions aimed at treatment of these disorders, epilepsy in particular. As the authors point out, this report seeks to contribute to the systematization of knowledge related to public health aspects of neurological disorders. "It is hoped that inspiration will facilitate greater cooperation, innovation and commitment in the prevention of neurological disorders that provide the best possible care to those who suffer."

Neurological Disorders: Challenges for Public Health provides information and advice on the best interventions that can engage the public health sector to reduce the prevalence and impact of neurological disorders. This book is already available in Spanish and is pioneering in the way it provides health professionals and policy planners an opportunity to assess the burden of these disorders in their respective countries to take appropriate actions.

Among its key findings, the book points out that this burden is already high and growing, and suggests that stigma and discrimination associated with public perception and treatment of many of these disorders is hindering progress. It also emphasizes the availability of cost-effective interventions and points out that many neurological disorders can be prevented and treated, reiterating the call for a parallel increase in resources which are currently inadequate.

This article is available in spanish at: <http://www.paho.org/spanish/dd/pin/ps080827a.htm>

News from Central America

Workshop on policies associated with the problems stemming from alcohol consumption (Panama)

During the 5th, 6th and 7th of August a workshop on "alcohol-related problems and responses in America", was held in Panama. The workshop began its development agreement signed by PAHO and the Autonomous Community of Valencia (Spain). The project will develop in Panama, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Guyana. The main lines are policy development, research on consumption and on injuries resulting from alcohol consumption, and training in brief interventions to professionals in Primary Health Care.

New project of technical cooperation among countries on "Primary care and mental health"

It approved a technical draft regarding cooperation among countries on "Primary care and community mental health network: strengthening cooperation between levels and the role of nursing." The project will be executed between Nicaragua, Cuba and R. Dominican.

Guatemala

Improving the accessibility of psychotropic drugs

The Ministry of Public Health and Welfare of Guatemala has issued a ministerial agreement on 21 July, 2008 by which the procedure the National Hospital for Mental Health provides medicines to hospitals and health centers inside the country. This agreement seeks to consolidate a procedure that aims to ensure the accessibility of psychotropic drugs to citizens.

Protocol on infant-care youth



The Ministry of Public Health and Welfare through the National Mental Health Programme has published a Memorandum of mental health care for the infant-juvenile population. This approach will help strengthen and improve the quality of care of health services.

Coming EVENTS

- XIII Dominican Republic Congress of Psychiatric, Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, 31 October - 2 November 2008
- 51st International ICAA Conference on Dependencies, Limassol, Chipre, 2-7 November 2008. www.icaa.ch/ICAA_Limassol_2008_main.html
- XXV Congress APAL 2008, Isla Margarita. Venezuela, November 18- 22, 2008. www.apal2008.org