

Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit



January 2008

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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 the community 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 researchers in the region. We hope it will become a useful tool for all those working in this important area of public health all over the Americas.

Conference on the "Strengthening of National Capacities for Mental Health Research in Latin America and the Caribbean"



The conference on "Strengthening of National Capacities for Mental Health Research in Latin America and the Caribbean" was held in Kingston, Jamaica from December 3-5, 2007. The main theme of the meeting was to address research regarding violence.

The conference was part of the "Project for the Development of Mental Health Research in Latin America and the Caribbean,"

which is supported by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) located in the United States. The process leading to this conference began in Puebla, Mexico in 2002 and continued through December of 2006 at a meeting held in Mexico City. The main objectives of the conference were, as previously mentioned, to strengthen the national capacities of mental health research in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to contribute to the training of young researchers and address the subject of violence from the perspective of the Health Sector, specifically how the effects of violence are seen as a relevant problem in the profile of mental health in the region.

During the inaugural session Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, Chief of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Rehabilitation Unit of PAHO/WHO, thanked the authorities of the *University of the West Indies* along with the PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Jamaica for their support. A special acknowledgement was also made to Dr. Frederick Hickling who organized the conference.

Those who participated in the opening session included Dr. Ernest Pate, Representative of PAHO/WHO in Jamaica, Professor Nigel Harris, *Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies*, Dr. Karen Babich, *Director of Global Mental Health at the NIMH*, and Dr. Frederick Hickling.

Also, Professor Nigel Harris presented the topic "Health Research in the Caribbean." The key note speaker was Dr. Delbert S. Elliott, Ph.D., Distinguished professor Emeritus and Director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado; the title of his conference was Violence Prevention in Young People.

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Members of the Network for Mental Health Research participated in the meeting as well as a group of young researchers from countries including Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Peru. Other prominent investigators that attended the conference were from the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean.



The meeting allowed for the assessment of what had been achieved for the project in the past three years and gave insight on what can be done in the future. During the final session of the conference, the challenges and problems regarding sustainability of the process were addressed as well as how to make changes in the field. The changes include a) strengthening the Regional Network of Investigators in the field of mental health, along with institutional capacities at the national level, b) creating a Regional Center of Mental Health Research, c) consolidating the ties among institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean with centers in the USA and Canada, and d) continuing to train young researchers in the region.

In closing, PAHO/WHO reiterated its commitment to continue supporting the development of mental health research in the countries of the region and to training young researchers with the help of others.

Declaration of the World Psychiatry Association (WPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on the role of psychiatrists in disaster situations

The World Psychiatry Association (WPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a Declaration with the purpose of turning the attention of the international psychiatric community towards the needs of people affected by disasters, to understand the key actions that psychiatrists should take in these situations, and to recognize the value of collaboration with public health agencies.

The document suggested that the psychiatric societies, at both the national and local levels, should help advance the process by which psychiatrists approach these situations. In order to facilitate the process, the WPA has developed an Institutional Program of Response to Disasters and a Scientific Section on Disasters and Mental Health, along with an organization of local working groups responsible for producing educational resources in various languages and protocols for training and care.

After a disaster takes place, psychiatrists are expected to reestablish the community mental health services in order to address the increase in the prevalence of mental disorders in the affected population. To efficiently manage the population, the trauma should be dealt with using health and mental health services. These services have a dual function, one being that they can be used under normal circumstances and the other used in case of disasters or emergency situations. Although disasters produce tragedy, they also serve as an impetus for personal improvement, they increase the ability for the community to recover, and overall, strengthen the mental health system.

Honduras A Study in Psychiatric Hospitals

With the technical support of PAHO and as part of the evaluation of the mental health system in Honduras (WHO-AIMS), a study was done on the patients (with acute mental illness) of Mario Mendoza Psychiatric Hospital along with the chronic psychiatric patients at Santa Rosita Psychiatric Hospital. These are the only two hospitals in the country that allow hospitalization of patients. The purpose of the study was to set certain priorities and guidelines for the coming years with the hope of improving the mental health system in Honduras.

Dominican Republic Mental Health Support during an Emergency

As a result of the recent floods in the Dominican Republic, PAHO has offered mental health support to those affected by the disaster. Dr. Moisés Guardado of El Salvador, who belongs to the regional group of experts created PAHO, traveled to the Dominican Republic to provide assistance to the community.

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[INEBRIA LATINA >>](#)

PAHO, through its Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Rehabilitation Unit, is sponsoring the initiative INEBRIA LATINA.

The purpose of the INEBRIA LATINA is to bring together health professionals, investigators, students and individuals (interested in the development and implementation of preventive actions for substance abuse) in Latin America and Latin American populations living in different regions of the world.

The objectives of the INEBRIA LATINA website are to:

- Offer a news channel to exchange information about Latin America.
- Maintain a discussion forum service for registered members.
- Facilitate access to online publications on subjects of interest.
- Maintain an online bulletin (The first three are already available).
- Provide links to related material.

(only in Spanish and Portuguese)

Colombia Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Situations of Disaster (IASC)

Colombia is the Spanish-speaking country that has been elected to make new guidelines (IASC) for the purpose of coordinating and promoting psychosocial and mental health support in emergency situations. These guidelines are going to be applied in the Regions of Tumaco and Ricaurte (Nariño) and in Tibu (north of Santander). In order to create a coordination group, meetings have been held at governmental institutions, such as agencies of the UN, and at NGOs that work in the field. At the national level, the process will be organized by the PAHO/WHO Regional Office in Colombia and in each region, institutions or agencies involved will create a local group.

Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean finalize projects of "Technical Cooperation Among Countries (TCAC) in the field of Mental Health"

During the month of November, the final workshops of two projects of TCAC in the subregion were held. In Cuba the final workshop of the TCAC Panama-Cuba took place on the "Development of Policies, Plans and Legislation in Mental Health." In Guatemala, the project TCAC was based on "the component of mental health in primary care", which was developed between Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.



Mental Health in the Americas

[A Change of Mentality >>](#)
(Only in Spanish)

**Mental Health Information on
PAHO/WHO Webpage**

Coming EVENTS

- 5th National Congress, National Institute of Social Security & II Regional WPA Zone 3 Conference. Mexico City, Mexico, February 1-5, 2008.
- II International Conference on Medicine & Women's Mental Health: Assimilating a Different Approach. Medellin, Colombia, February 14-16, 2008. www.ces.edu.co
- XXII Centro American Congress on Psychiatric, ACAP 2008 Managua, Nicaragua, March 12-15, 2008.
- Panamerican Conference on Infant Juvenile Mental Health. WPA & Cuban Society of Psychiatry. Havana, Cuba, March 24-28, 2008. <http://www.cpalco.com>
- Argentine Mental Health Association: Modernity, Technology and Contemporary Symptoms. Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 27-29, 2008. www.aasaludmental.org
- WPA Thematic Conference on Depression and Relevant Psychiatric Condition in Primary Care, Granada, Spain, June 19-21, 2008. www.wpa2008granada.org
- IX International Congress on Traumatic Stress, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 25-27, 2008. www.psicotrauma.org.ar
- XXV Congress APAL 2008, Isla Margarita. Venezuela, November 18- 22, 2008. www.apal2008.org