



**Pan American  
Health  
Organization**

Regional Office of the  
World Health Organization

**MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES  
AND  
REHABILITATION  
BULLETIN**

July 2008

## **Honoris Causa to Dr. Itzhak Levav**



On 3rd July 2008, The National University of Cordoba, Argentina, distinguished Dr. Itzhak Levav with an Honoris Causa degree, which was proposed by the deans of the Schools of Psychology, Master Patricia Altamirano, and of Medicine, Dr. José María Willington. Dr. Levav was for many years the chief of Regional Mental Health Program of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) in Washington, D.C.

The ceremony, held in the historic salon of the rectory, was attended by the above mentioned deans as well as local and municipal authorities, family members, friends and members of the student body. The opening was preceded by an emotive performance of the Physical Sciences choir of students. The certificate was handed out by the Dean of the Medical School; the diploma and medal was received by Dr. Levav from the hands of the Dean of the Law School.

Dr. Levav, who was born in the province of Entre Rios, Argentina, thanked the National University of Cordoba and expressed his appreciation to those from whom he had learned the most during his life: Dr. Mauricio Goldemberg and PAHO.

This important recognition was awarded to him due to his work in the field of mental health, his publications and research work. Two milestones in Dr. Levav's career were the Conference of Caracas and the inclusion of the human rights approach to people with mental disorders, which were outstanding contributions to the Region.

The creation of the Master's degree in Mental Health, recently approved by the Board of Directors, was highly praised during the ceremony. It will be coordinated by the Director of the Medical School Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Rubén Ferro and by Mr. Miguel A. Escalante, professor of the School of Psychology. This activity has received the support of PAHO/WHO, and will be starting during 2009. It will articulate activities with universities in Europe and Canada.

## **Mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP)**

The Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) will be formally launched in WHO, Geneva, on 9th October 2008.

The mhGAP is WHO's action plan to scale up services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders for countries especially with low and lower middle incomes.

Mental, neurological and substance use disorders are highly prevalent and burdensome globally. The gap between what is urgently needed and what is available to reduce the burden is still very wide.

For more information; [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/mhGAP/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhGAP/en/index.html)

## **International Conference on Integration of Mental Health in Primary Health Care**

It is increasingly urgent to properly incorporate the psychosocial aspects in the comprehensive approach to health problems. At the same time, existing strategies in Mental Health and Addictions consider the Community as an essential component. Primary Health Care is a propitious environment, closer to people, with more coverage, capable of providing effective responses from a holistic view and it facilitates the responsiveness of the health care system.

This arises the need for better integration of Mental Health in Primary Care, which implies challenges in various fields, including public policies, respect for local culture and human rights, the organization of the health care system, dialogue between disciplines and health teams, human resources training activities, self-care, as well as the development of effective actions based on best practices and evidence.

Totally aware of the situation and thirty years after the Declaration of Alma Ata, the Ministry of Health of Chile (MINSAL), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Ontario, Canada (CAMH), are organizing the International Conference on Integration of Mental Health in Primary Health Care, which will take place in Santiago, Chile, 23 - 25 September, 2008. The aim of the meeting is to discuss best practices and national and international evidence in order to contribute to the process of strengthening the integration of Mental Health in Primary Care in Chile as well as in other countries of the Region. This event is in line with a previous activity, organized by CAMH, which took place in Toronto, Canada, where guests participated in various committees to discuss this issue, globally.

The Conference will hopefully become a milestone both for Primary Health Care and Mental Health in the Region. Prominent guests and national and international authorities will participate in the event. There will also be presentations of concrete experiences that will help facilitate the discussion and analysis to reach conclusions and recommendations that can be implemented in the future.

### **Colombia: a case study on the implementation of the IASC guide**

The case study, which was finished in June 2008, was based on the implementation of the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in three municipalities (Leiva, Ricaurte and Tumaco), and the department of Nariño.

A phase of design and training was carried out before implementing the Guidelines, from April to June. Among the activities that took place at the municipal level we can include: 1) complete the directory of actors and mapping activities in different sectors; 2) Community participation in meetings; 3) Diagnosis of priority needs and design of an action plan in line with Guides.

The document was shown as a useful tool for cross-sectoral coordination, which served to support organizations and communities in carrying out a diagnosis of priorities and the design of minimal responses from a comprehensive perspective. Based on the experiments developed in other contexts, the study recommended the creation of practical tools to facilitate their implementation, as well as to provide additional guidance with regard to interventions that can be developed on the ground with and without external support.

*Fundación Dos Mundos* was in charge of the external observation of the process.

#### **Coming EVENTS**

- **WFMH International Forum on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, London, England, 28-29 August 2008.** [www.wfmh.org](http://www.wfmh.org)
- **XX Peruvian Congress of Psychiatric, Lima, Peru, 29-31 August, 2008.** [www.app.org.pe](http://www.app.org.pe)
- **XIII Dominican Republic Congress of Psychiatric, Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, 31 October - 2 November 2008**
- **51<sup>st</sup> International ICAA Conference on Dependencies, Limassol, Chipre, 2-7 November 2008.**  
[www.icaa.ch/ICAA\\_Limassol\\_2008\\_main.html](http://www.icaa.ch/ICAA_Limassol_2008_main.html)
- **XXV Congress APAL 2008, Isla Margarita. Venezuela, November 18- 22, 2008.** [www.apal2008.org](http://www.apal2008.org)