

Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit



June 2007

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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

*“Transcultural Mental Health in a Changing World: Building a Global Response”
2007 Official Motto*

10th October, “World Mental Health Day”

“Regional Workshop on the Protection of Mental Health in Disasters and Emergencies”

The workshop was held in Panama City from 10th to 12th of April. It was organized by the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster relief area (PED) in conjunction with the Mental Health Unit of PAHO/WHO. Twenty nine specialists from all over the Region of the Americas were in attendance. The goals of this workshop were: 1- to form a regional crisis response team for disasters and emergencies; 2- provide participants with updated information about mental health crises and emergencies as well as to share PAHO/WHO's technical position on the subject; 3- lay the foundations of a training strategy based on defined criteria and available materials.

Dr. Van Alphen (PED) introduced the characteristics of the Regional Crisis Response Team and its inclusion within a national disasters plan.

She emphasized the necessity of working under certain principles, such as: providing truthful information, being trustworthy and avoiding causing harm. Dr. Jorge Rodríguez (Mental Health/PAHO) gave a general vision of mental health in these circumstances, and stressed the need for an assessment of harms from the perspective of mental health (EDAN), which should be contextualized and should respond to the expectations of the population, without tending to “psychiatrize” certain aspects that can be considered normal reactions during a crisis. Previous experiences show how much more efficient mental health interventions can be when there are trained primary health care teams and an existing community mental health network.



Another element they emphasized was the fact that the teams themselves may turn vulnerable mostly when they have too much work to do. Other more specific subjects of intervention were also addressed during the workshop. Dr. Paula Lomba, introduced the issue of “group work,” while Dr. Maria Cristina Taborda dealt with psychopathological aspects such as “psychological disorders in these situations.”

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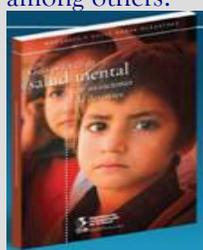
More information about the Workshop in Panama...

A special session of the workshop was dedicated to specific population groups. Lic. Lorena Sáenz dealt with the infant-juvenile population and Lic. Santiago Valero spoke about psycho-social assistance for the crisis response team. Lic. Ricardo Pérez closed the individual presentations and introduced the subject of social communication during these experiences.

The workshop also included practice activities where specialists worked in groups and discussed information about a real case in order to design a strategy of intervention including the mental health component.

Presentation in Panama of the "Practical Guide for Mental Health in Disasters" (only in Spanish)

This guide, which belongs to the collection of "Manuals and Guides on Disasters," was presented during the "Regional Workshop on Mental Health in Disasters and Emergencies" held in Panama City, last April. The ceremony was presided by the Representative of PAHO in Panama, Dr. Guadalupe Verdejo, and the presentation was made by Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, Chief of PAHO's Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit and editor of the guide together with Mónica Zaccarelli and Ricardo Pérez. The guide was commented by a panel of experts formed by Dr. Fania de Roach, coordinator of the Mental Health Program of MINSA, Lic Eliana Valdés - from SINAPROC-, and Lic Ivette Rivera from Panama's Red Cross. The audience included people coming from different fields of interest such as the sanitary sector, social services, universities, associations of users and relatives, mental health professionals, among others.



The guide describes the procedures for the identification and management of the different psycho-social manifestations presented by victims of disasters.

It is, therefore, of utmost importance for crisis teams, primary health care and humanitarian workers. It is a practical guide made by professionals of recognized experience.



OPS/OMS

<http://www.bireme.br/php/index.php>



Psiquiatría
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On-line Community
Psychiatry

PAHO Dissemination
Partner

*This Web page is
dedicated to the field of
Community Mental
Health, with multiple
links to sites related to
the subject.*

Community
Library
Forums/Blog

Director:
Rafael Sepúlveda
Psiquiatrist

www.psiquiatriasur.cl
(In Spanish only)

Community Mental Health Services will lessen social exclusion, says WHO

Geneva, 1 June - The World Health Organization (WHO) signalled the urgent need for countries to provide a network of community mental health services at its Global Forum for Community Mental Health (Geneva, 30-31 May 2007). For the first time, WHO invited people living with mental disorders to attend the Forum, sending a message to countries that it is important to give a voice to this excluded group to claim their rights and secure their participation in society.

More information on the Global Forum for Community Mental Health: www.gfcmh.com

Coming EVENTS

- VI Simposio Internacional "Aspectos Biológicos y Farmacoterapéuticos de los Trastornos Mentales", La Habana, Cuba, June 18-22, 2007, ccunp@infomed.sld.cu

- Congreso Latinoamericano de Adicciones: Adicciones un Desafío a la Mente", Medellín, Colombia, July 26-29, 2007, congresoalad2007@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

- WPA International Congress, "Working Together for Mental
Health: Partnerships for Policy and Practice", Melbourne,
Australia, Nov 28 - Dec 2, 2007
<http://www.wpa2007melbourne.com>