



**Organización
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de la Salud**

Oficina Regional de la
Organización Mundial de la Salud

**MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES
AND
REHABILITATION
BULLETIN**

MAY 2008

Call for 'Serious Commitment to Improve Mental Health'



From the left: Dr. Ron C. Kessler, Harvard Medical School; Dr. Robert Freedman, chief editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry; Dr. Maja Zecevic, The Lancet; Dr. David Satcher, Morehouse School of Medicine; Dr. Cristina Beato, PAHO; Dr. Eliot Sorel, The George Washington University; and Dr. Thomas Insel, National Institute of Mental Health. (Photo by Sonia M. Mey-PAHO/WHO)

Washington, D.C., May 7, 2008 (PAHO)—"We need to move ahead with a serious commitment to improve mental health," said Pan American Health Organization Deputy Director Dr. Cristina Beato at the launch of The Lancet's Global Mental Health series in the Americas.

The key messages are clear: "Mental health has been neglected, and the resources for it are inadequate, insufficient, and inadequately distributed," Dr. Beato said. Mental disorders affect one of every four persons, she said, and the disease burden from mental illness climbed from 8.8 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2002. "It is imperative to reduce the gaps. Mental illness is not a personal failure, and mental health disorders can be treated like any other illness, with proper results," she said.

The Lancet noted, "Despite the publication of high-profile reports and promising activities in several countries, progress in mental health service development has been slow in most low-income and middle-income countries."

Barriers to mental health service development, The Lancet noted in an article by Dr Benedetto Saraceno of the World Health Organization's Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, are numerous and include the resistance to decentralization of mental health services. There are also "challenges to implementation of mental health care in primary-care settings, and low numbers of workers who are trained in mental health care."

The launch of the Global Mental Health series at PAHO was organized by George Washington University's Department of Global Health, with PAHO, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), and the World Psychiatric Association. Dr. Jorge Rodriguez, project coordinator of Mental Health, start the event and present Dr. Beato. The Lancet's Maya Zecevic said, "This is truly a global problem, and The Lancet's mental health series seeks to bring about a powerful, focused and multidisciplinary call for action. The Lancet group plans within the next two years to evaluate progress on efforts to increase public awareness, evidence-based research, strategies and policies conceived an implemented globally in the arena of mental health."

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Mental Health in the Americas
[A Change of Mentality >>](#)
Mental Health Information on PAHO/
WHO Webpage



**World Fellowship for
schizophrenia and
allied disorders**
(WFSAD)
<http://espanol.world-schizophrenia.org/>
alianza/

Call for 'Serious Commitment to Improve Mental Health' (Continuation)



From the left: Dr. Eliot Sorel, George Washington University; Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, PAHO; and Dr. Cristina Beato, PAHO's Deputy Director. (Photo by Sonia M. Mey-PAHO/WHO)

Dr. Eliot Sorel of George Washington University introduced the panelists, including such world experts as Dr. Vikram Patel of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Sangath Centre in India and Dr. Thomas Insel, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health. Speakers also included former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher of the Morehouse School of Medicine, Dr. Ron C. Kessler of the Harvard School of Medicine and Dr. Robert Freedman, chief editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry.

"The Americas could become the model for integration of mental health and primary health care," George Washington University's Dr. Sorel said. "This is a historic moment, with the convergence of the evidence as laid out in the Lancet series. The Americas need this initiative."

PAHO, founded in 1902, works with all the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of their peoples. It also serves as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization.



Information and communication system for health for Central America and Dominican Republic

InfoCom is the information and communication system for health for Central America and Dominican Republic, initiative of the countries of the subregion, which originated from the context of the Special Meeting of the Health Sector of Central America and the Dominican Republic (RESSCAD) in 1995. InfoCom was developed with the technical support of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), with the objective of facilitating the exchange of data and health information in various issues in order to strengthen the preparation of national and subregional plans of health, decision-making, and the dissemination of experiences and successful interventions implemented by the countries in the subregion.

It is a dynamic site for the decentralized management online that makes it possible for all consultants responsible for the modules and issues to publish their own contents. The page has eight central modules (Water, Emergencies, Epidemiology, Policies, Promotion, Population Health, Services and Violence) and five issues (Gender, Ethnicity, and Health, Family and Community, Human Resources, International Health Regulations, and Mental Health). InfoCom furthermore has institutional liaisons with RESSCAD and COMISCA and other liaisons to the virtual Campus and with the Virtual Library of PAHO.

The mental health issue has several boxes; "Instruments and guides", "Evaluation of mental health services", "Primary Care and Mental Health", "Mental health of old age", "Bulletin of regional mental health program of PAHO" and "Publications."

The Web page of InfoCom has a new destination at <http://www.infocom-ca.org.pa/>

Coming EVENTS

- **II International Forum on Mental Health and Human Rights, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 22-25 Mayo 2008.** www.ensp.fiocruz.br/portal-ensp/eventos/index.php?#7430
- **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
- **XX Peruvian Congress of Psychiatric, Lima, Peru, 29-31 August, 2008.** www.app.org.pe
- **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

Multilateral program "Consumption of alcohol, associated problems, and responses in Latin America"

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) has signed an agreement with the government of the Autonomous Community of *Valencia (Spain) for multilateral cooperation called "alcohol Consumption, associated problems and responses in Latin America", which is a program with a duration of 36 months for the sum of 325,000 Euros.

The fundamental activities of this program are:

1. Formation of national committees responsible for the issues related to alcohol and the health of the public, in charge of coordinating the local actions in collaboration with PAHO.
2. Creation of specific plans for the data collection through research in accordance with the priorities identified in each country, as well as training of health professionals in primary care.
3. Creation of national policies that include action plans, timetable, and plans relating to the assessment of the results.

The program is designed for the six countries of the Region of the Americas: Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, and Guyana.

Implementation of the guidelines IASC (mental health and psychosocial support to displaced population) in Colombia

IASC Guía del IASC sobre Salud Mental y Apoyo Psicosocial en Emergencias Humanitarias y Catástrofes



From 13 to 19 April several workshops in Colombia have been developed for the implementation of the guiding IASC (Spanish version) for psychosocial support and in mental health of the displaced population. Day 14 saw the development of a national workshop in order to present the project to the agencies of United Nations involved in these subjects, governmental that act in the psychosocial field and of mental health, nongovernmental suspects in the support for the displaced populations by the armed conflicts and to other professional and academic organizations. The act had the participation of Dr. Pier Paolo Balladelli, representative of PAHO/WHO in Colombia, and as speakers were; the professor M. Wessells of the University of Columbia (the U.S.) and doctors J. Castilla, Health Consultant for Displaced Persons (PAHO/COL) and V. Aparicio, Subregional Adviser of Mental Health for Central America, Hispanic Caribbean and Mexico (PAHO/PAN).

The training workshop for the implementation of this guideline in the municipalities of Leyva, Ricaurte, and Tumaco (Department of Nariño) was held in Pasto, Nariño, from 15 to 17 April. At this workshop they assisted 30 professionals in the three municipalities and also from Pasto that they are currently attentive to the problems of the displaced population. The workshop was centered on the strategy to set up the guide having the interests and participation of the affected communities. Subsequently intersectional workshops were held for each municipality for the purpose of presenting a summarized version of the implementation to representatives of the communities and other key agents. The workshops had as speakers Prof. Wessells and Drs. C. Echeverri and V. Aparicio. The Fundación Dos Mundos of Colombia worked as external observer of the process of implementation.