



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

**MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES
AND
REHABILITATION
BULLETIN**

October 2008

CELEBRATING WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

***“Making Mental Health a Global Priority:
Scaling Up Services through Citizen Advocacy and Action”***

Act of the Region of the Americas to celebrate World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2008, Washington, D.C.

Launch of the World Health Organization's Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP)



From left: Dr. Jorge J. Rodríguez, Project Coordinator MH, Disabilities & Rehabilitation, PAHO; Charles Ray, Treasurer, WFMH; Preston J. Garrison, SG and CEO, WFMH; Deborah Maguire, Director-Awareness and Information Services, WFMH

PAHO/WHO headquarters in Washington, D.C. celebrated World Mental Health Day through an event held jointly with the World Federation for Mental Health. Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, Coordinator of the PAHO/WHO Regional Mental Health Gap Action Project, and Mr. Preston Garrison, Secretary-General of the World Federation for Mental Health, chaired the event.

Dr. Rodríguez gave a presentation on the Mental Health Gap Action Program. The Program was officially launched at WHO headquarters in Geneva this past 9 October, and WHO's Director-General was among those in attendance. The theme of the Program is "Expanding and Improving Care for Mental Health and Neurological Disorders, and Alcohol-related Problems." The Program's significance and what it can do for our countries has been recognized throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

In celebration of World Mental Health Day, the World Federation for Mental Health organized a very important scientific panel to address a number of issues related to this year's theme.

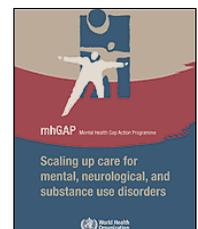
Emphasis was placed on the UN Secretary-General's message on World Health Day: "More broadly, we must do more to integrate mental health awareness into all aspects of health and social policy, health-system planning, and primary and secondary general health care. Mental health is of paramount importance for personal well-being, family relationships, and an individual's ability to contribute to society. On this World Mental Health Day, let us recognize that there can be no health without mental health."

Likewise, two basic ideas were underscored: the fact that mental illness can be prevented, treated, and cured; and that now is the time to act.

For more information, visit the following:

[WHO calls for urgent scaling up of services for mental disorders
mental health Gap Action Programme \(mhGAP\)](#)

[WHO Director-General address at the launch of the WHO mental health gap action programme](#)



English Caribbean Countries

The English Speaking Caribbean countries celebrated the World Mental Health day in different ways, most of them taking the entire week to launch different initiatives aiming at disseminating and promoting mental health issues.

Trinidad and Tobago



Recognizing the importance of mental health, the Minister of Health in Trinidad and Tobago, Jerry Narace designated October 10-17 as Mental Health Week in Trinidad and Tobago and several events took place.

With the phrase, "No health without mental health", public health discourse now includes mental health, in its positive sense, as well as mental illness. Just as public health and the population health approach are established in other areas such as heart health and tobacco control, so it is becoming clearer that, "Mental health is everybody's business".

From October 14-16, 2008, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the PAHO/WHO held the National Forum on Mental Health Promotion and Mental Disease Prevention.

Approximately 60 attended the national forum with representation from: the Ministry of Health and Regional Health Authorities; the Tobago House of Assembly; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development; the Ministry of Social Development; the Ministry of the Attorney General; the University of the West Indies; the Chamber of Industry and Commerce; the National Parent Teachers Association and the private sector. As well, the attendance of Dr. Saxena, WHO Coordinator, Mental Health Evidence, Research and Action on Mental and Brain Disorders; Dr. Rodriguez, PAHO/WHO Mental Health Coordinator, and Ms. Kestel, PAHO/WHO Mental Health Sub-regional Advisor for the English-speaking Caribbean were key to the process.

In the Forum's opening ceremony, Dr. Boyd Scobie, PAHO/WHO Representative in Trinidad and Tobago emphasized that mental health is a fundamental human right enabling people to experience life as meaningful and to be creative, active and productive.

The Minister of Health in Trinidad and Tobago, Jerry Narace stated that addressing mental health is a major priority of the government, as it aims to ensure social inclusion where "everyone will be provided with an opportunity to make a contribution to national development". He furthermore announced that the 2008 Mental Health Bill has been finalized and will shortly be presented to the Legislative Review Committee.

Dr. Rodriguez, spoke about challenges and responses in mental health in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Dr. Wendel Abel from the Department of Community Health and Psychiatry at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies provided a regional perspective on mental health services in the Caribbean.

Dr. Shekhar Saxena, focused on strengthening the mental health system in the country, and presented how to assess mental health systems through the application of the WHO Assessment Instrument for Mental Health Systems (WHO-AMIS). Trinidad and Tobago is currently implementing this tool and Dr Indar Ramtahal, Chair of the National Mental Health Committee, made a presentation on the preliminary results from its implementation. The final report of the assessment is to be completed by the end of 2008.

In the National Forum, the Ministry of Health decided to focus on two important settings for mental health promotion and mental disease prevention - schools and workplaces.

Continuation

Professor Gerald Hutchinson from the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies provided an employer perspective on mental health promotion in Trinidad and Tobago.

On the evening of October 15, 2008 the Ministry of Health held its 5th Health Sector Quality Awards Ceremony. This is the first year that mental health was included as a specific award category. **Congratulations to Dr. Stafford Pierre and his staff of the Arima Rehabilitation Centre.** Not only did the Centre win the award under the Mental Health Category but several other categories as well. Special recognition was also given to the work of Dr. Pierre on an individual basis as he received the award for Quality Individual of the Year (Clinical).



Belize The Belize Mental Health Program joined the Mental Health Association, consumer groups, and the University of Belize to commemorate the 16th annual World Mental Health Day campaign on October 10. Activities included, Open day at mental health facilities, radio talk show to raise awareness, walk for mental health, high school debate on issues related to the delivery of mental health services. The activities ended with a balloon lift off which is a sign of hope for a better mental health.

Barbados, Jamaica y Montserrat had an open day at mental health facilities, together with radio and television features on mental health, public lectures, social activities for consumers and service providers.

Bahamas, Saint Kitts y Nevis hold their mental health policy development meetings

St. Lucia launched its mental health anti-stigma campaign under the theme 'Treasure Minds', producing and disseminating advocacy posters, books marks, pencils featuring the mental health unit contact number 450-MIND, educational materials on various mental health disorders and on maintaining good mental health.

These are just some of the initiatives that during the entire week took place around the Caribbean countries. Each country (including many not quoted here) used the opportunity to advocate once more for mental health in their respective countries, in a effort to increase awareness of the needs to scaling up mental health services for mental disorders.

Central America, the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean, and Mexico:

Costa Rica. A series of mental health research workshops were organized by the Ministry of Health, the Interagency Program of Mental Health Research and Society (an initiative of the Social Research Institute); and the University of Costa Rica's Psychological Research Institute, its School of Psychology, and School of Public Health. These activities were supported by PAHO/WHO. At these events, the findings of mental health research conducted in Costa Rica were presented and a debate was held on the need to implement the country's 2004-2010 National Mental Health Plan. Some 100 professionals took part in these events.

Dominican Republic. A meeting was held that brought together the users and family members of the Mental Health Committees of Libertador de Herrera, Gualey, and Los Mina, and the Mental Health Clinic [*Centro de Día*] of Hospital Dr. Rafael Moscoso Puello. At the event, tribute was paid to the contributions of health professionals working through these committees in the areas of mental health promotion, prevention, and rehabilitation, with special emphasis on the health promotion advocacy of associations of family members. In addition, a panel discussion was held on the basic rights of persons afflicted with mental illness at the Padre Billini Psychiatric Hospital.



Panama. The country celebrated an event whose theme was "Making Mental Health a Global Priority." On hand were the PAHO/WHO Representative in Panama, Dr. Ángel Valencia, and Panama's National Mental Health Coordinator, Dr. Juana Herrera. Participating in the event were more than 200 representatives from health institutions and other sectors, as well as members of citizen and family associations. For more information: : http://www.ops-oms.org.pa/docs/DM_S_Mental_2008.pdf

Continuation

El Salvador. First Lady Ana Ligia Mixco de Saca, who also chairs El Salvador's National Mental Health Council, presented the country's National Mental Health Policy to the Deputy Minister of Public Health. The First Lady, in her role as President of the Council, presented PAHO representatives with a commemorative plaque in recognition of the Organization's ongoing support for mental health issues. More than 200 participants were on hand for the event, including representatives of the health, education, and labor sectors; NGOs; academia, associations of family members of mental health patients, as well as young people and community leaders.

Guatemala. World Mental Health Day was commemorated at a forum entitled "Making Mental Health a Priority: Scaling Up Services through Citizen Action and Advocacy". This activity was organized by the National Mental Health Program and included some 80 attendees.

Mexico. Speaking at a World Mental Health Day celebration in the city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico's Secretary of Public Health, José Ángel Córdova Villalobos, stated: "Mental health is a priority health area requiring more services and budgetary resources, given the growing number of cases of mental illness and the fact that anyone can be affected by these problems and should receive specialized treatment."

Nicaragua. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the National Psychiatric Hospital, organized an event to raise awareness on mental health issues ("*Hablatórn!*").

South America. Several events were held to commemorate World Mental Health Day. To learn more, visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Mwi_Qjysxs

Coming EVENTS

- 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