

Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit



September 2007

Unit Team:

Dr. Jorge Rodriguez
Unit Chief
(Washington, D.C., USA)
rodrigo@paho.org

Dr. Maristela Monteiro
Regional Adviser on Alcohol and Substance
Abuse
(Washington, D.C., USA)
monteirm@paho.org

Dr. Hugo Cohen
Sub-regional Adviser on Mental Health for
South America (Buenos Aires, Argentina)
cohenh@arg.ops-oms.org

Dr. Victor Aparicio
Sub-regional Adviser on Mental Health for
Mexico, Central America, and the
Hispanic Caribbean
(Panamá, Panamá)
aparicit@pan.ops-oms.org

Mrs. Devora Kestel
Subregional Adviser on Mental Health for
the English Speaking Caribbean Countries
(Barbados)
kestelde@cpc.paho.org

Dr. Armando Vásquez
Regional Adviser on Rehabilitation
(Santiago, Chile)
vasqueza@chi.ops-oms.org

Mr. Javier Vásquez
Human Rights Specialist
Legal Affairs Area /Technology and
Health Services Delivery Area
(Washington, D.C., USA)
vasquezj@paho.org

**Prof. M.Florencia Di Masi de
Alconada -Consultant-**
Mental Health, Alcohol, Substance Abuse
and Rehabilitation Unit
(Washington, DC, USA)
dimasima@paho.org

Secretariat:
Mrs. Martha Koev
koevmart@paho.org

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

Subregional Workshop on Prevention and Control of Suicidal Behavior León, Nicaragua, August 2, 2007

It was organized by PAHO and the Health Research and Demography Center of the National University of Nicaragua. Among the participants were: Dr. José Bertolote, from WHO's Mental Health Department, Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, Chief of PAHO's Mental Health Unit, Dr. Victor Aparicio, Sub-regional Adviser on Mental Health for Mexico, Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean, and government officials from the Ministries of Health of Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Belize, Panama, Colombia and Nicaragua

Dr. Jorge Rodríguez, laid emphasis on the global and regional relevance of the subject, as mental health disorders are important contributors to the global burden of disease (13%), with high social and economic costs and a prevalence of 20-25%. He also praised the significant work of both the Ministry of Health and the UNAN - León, stressing the fact that Nicaragua has developed public policies on mental health and research.



The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of UNAN, Dr. Rodolfo Peña, thanked for the recognition of the many years of efforts and hard work devoted to mental health by Nicaragua, where suicide has lately become a severe problem. The Vice-minister of Health, Dr. Guillermo González, indicated that there is almost one suicide per day in Nicaragua and that 9% of the population is at risk, which has turned this serious situation into a priority for the Ministry.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY
10 October 2007

Mental Health in a Changing World: The Impact of Culture and Diversity
[World Federation for Mental Health](http://www.wfmh.org)

Bulletin of the Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Unit

ALCOPOPS

A Study by the Marin Institute, California, USA

Alcopops are sweetened alcoholic beverages that are often bubbly and fruit-flavored, and resemble soda or other soft drinks. While these products derive much of their alcohol from distilled spirits, industry calls them "flavored malt beverages," because that makes them sound like beer, which keeps their taxes low.



Maristela Monteiro, M.D., Ph.D., PAHO's Regional Advisor on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, informs about an original data analysis undertaken by the Marin Institute, from California, USA, to calculate the true cost of alcopops in California, both in terms of lives and money. The report (2007) concluded that alcopops cost California \$1.25 billion dollars, 60 lives, and 50,000 incidents of harm.

<http://www.marininstitute.org/alcopops/index.htm>

On 14 August 2007, the California State Board of Equalization (BOE) made history when they set in motion a rulemaking procedure to tax alcopops as distilled spirits, instead of the current "beer" classification. Taxing flavored malt beverages as liquor will help reduce their popularity with young people by simply pricing the product out of their reach and a step forward in controlling underage consumption of alcohol.

It is estimated that with the new tax in place, the lives of 21 youth will be saved, as well as \$437 million dollars in societal costs. The tax is also expected to reduce underage alcopop consumption in the state by 35 percent. The proposed tax could increase the average price of alcopops by an estimated 25% and generate over \$40 million dollars for the state treasury. In addition, the funds could be used for alcohol prevention programs and emergency medical

Mental Health Social Enterprise Management of a High Mountain Refuge El Bolsón, Río Negro, Argentina



PAHO's Subregional Advisor on Mental Health for South America, Dr. Hugo Cohen, informs us that within the framework of Río Negro's law for the "Health and Social Promotion of People who Suffer from Mental Health Disorders", the local hospital's **Cooperative of users of mental health services**, was awarded the management of a High Mountain Refuge, for climbers and skiers, which had been closed for some time and then put out to public tender. Services provided: lodging for 100 people, meals and ski equipment.

As from next winter, a new restaurant and a ski-lift will be opened at the foot of Piltriquitrón, the highest peak in the area. This cooperative is already managing another restaurant and a Café in El Bolsón's Civic Center, a city located south of Bariloche, in Argentina's Patagonia Region.



www.psiquiatriasur.cl
(In Spanish only)



OPS/OMS
<http://www.bireme.br/>

Coming EVENTS

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

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

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

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

-Psychosocial Programmes in Emergencies: What are we learning from practice? Oxford, UK, 27- 28 October, 2007. <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/>

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