



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

**MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES
AND
REHABILITATION
BULLETIN**

September 2008

Strengthening Health Care Systems for the Improvement of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care in the Americas

Miami, Florida, September 3-5, 2008.



This Workshop was co-sponsored by the Mental Health, Disabilities and Rehabilitation Project of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch of SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration / US Department of Health and Human Services).

The meeting aimed at the improvement of mental health care for children, adolescents and their families in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to the increase of knowledge based on experiences developed in diverse socio-cultural-linguistic traditions. The discussion about the "Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and their Families Program", which was developed in the USA and could benefit many Latin-American and Caribbean countries, was highly relevant.

More than 30 people, with broad experience in the field of child-youth mental health and having different perspectives (health care professionals, researchers, youth, parents and other groups), attended the workshop. They came from USA, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean.



The opening session was chaired by Dr. Jorge J. Rodríguez, Coordinator of the Mental Health, Disabilities and Rehabilitation Project of the Pan American Health Organization and Dr Gary M. Blau, Chief of the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch of SAMHSA. Hopefully, this event will become the starting point for a process of collaboration between both institutions in the field of child and adolescent mental health.

Mental health care for children, adolescents, and their families is of critical importance in Latin America and the Caribbean. Epidemiological studies that have been carried out demonstrate that the prevalence of psychological disorders during childhood is estimated at 13% or more. Also, in many countries of the Region, children and adolescents have suffered multiple traumatic experiences, such as war or internal armed conflicts, population displacements, natural disasters and domestic violence; all within the context of marked poverty and social exclusion. These concerns are relevant to the United States as individuals from these countries immigrate to the U.S. and present themselves to human service providers.

The gap, however, between those who suffer from a mental health disorder and those who receive specialized service or another type of care is enormous. National mental health plans, in several countries, are still targeted at the care of severe psychiatric disorders in the adult population and these services are based in large psychiatric hospitals located in the countries' capitals. Mental health services devoted to childhood and adolescence are limited and, in many cases, nonexistent. There is also a lack of community-based comprehensive mental health programs for this population group, and participation by the education system in these plans is lacking. However, some countries in the Region have made some positive strides in the field of childhood and adolescent

World Suicide Prevention Day



The World Health Organization estimates that one million people die in the World each year by suicide; and for every person who completes a suicide, 20 or more may attempt to end their lives. On the occasion of World Suicide Prevention Day, celebrated on 10 September, WHO and its Regional Office for the Americas (Pan American Health Organization/PAHO) expressed their certainty that huge progress could be made in the prevention of this growing challenge for public health if governments commit themselves to the definition of national responses to prevent suicide as well as to the provision of adequate treatment for mental disorders.

World suicide rates and trends confirm the seriousness of the situation. Worldwide, suicide rates have increased by 60% over the last 50 years. In 2004, WHO/PAHO estimates indicated that 63,000 people had committed suicide that year.

Experts from PAHO are currently providing technical cooperation to the countries of the Region to help them accelerate the mental health reform processes and reduce the scarcity, in number and in training, of specialized human resources. World Suicide Prevention Day is an initiative of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO). The 2008 theme is "Think Globally. Plan Nationally. Act Locally". According to IASP, it is a unique opportunity to encourage people worldwide to unite in commitment and action to promote understanding about suicide and ensure that it is prevented, by promoting leadership and the development of national strategies and by highlighting local initiatives to prevent suicide.

Dr. Jorge J. Rodriguez, Coordinator of the Mental Health, Disabilities and Rehabilitation Project of the Pan American Health Organization participated in the official launching of the World Suicide Prevention Day, which took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In his presentation, he reflected on the strategies and challenges of the approach to mental health and suicide prevention, focusing mainly on the situation in the Americas.



International Conference: "Integrating Mental Health into Primary Care: A Global Perspective"

The Montreal PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre at the Douglas Mental Health University Institute is organizer the International Conference and Launching of the Report by the World Health Organization and the World Organization of Family Doctors, to be held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on November 26 2008.

This conference will bring into focus the various elements and factors that need to be addressed in order to develop primary mental health care services. It will be the occasion to Launch the WHO Report on "Integrating Mental Health into Primary Health Care", to hear of different national experiences taking into account geographical and cultural contexts; special attention will be given to the model currently being developed in Quebec

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, 10/10 2008

MAKING MENTAL HEALTH A GLOBAL PRIORITY - SCALING UP SERVICES THROUGH CITIZEN ADVOCACY AND ACTION.

For more information: <http://www.wfmh.org/02WFMHDay08.htm>

Coming EVENTS

- XIII Dominican Republic Congress of Psychiatric, Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, 31 October - 2 November 2008
- 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