

EDITORIAL

Illicit drug misuse remains an escalating and critical problem in the Americas. Among its many harmful consequences are health harms, drug trafficking and a range of associated costs. Social stability and development may be at risk in some settings because of prolonged drug-related violence and diminished prospects for economic investment. The new Hemispheric Drug Strategy for the Americas seeks to deepen public understanding of the scope and breadth of the drug problem. It highlights the extensive impact that illicit drug use has on both the human body as well as society as a whole. CICAD aims to reduce the drug dependence crisis by crafting programs that are aligned with the Hemispheric Drug Strategy.

The current infrastructure for dealing with drug misuse is extremely limited across Latin American and Caribbean member states, with very few dedicated resources.¹⁻⁵ The research evidence base with respect to illicit drug use is particularly inadequate in Latin America and almost non-existent in the Caribbean region.⁶⁻⁸ There is also a huge need for specialized personnel to analyze and assess drug-related problems. Unfortunately, few professionals in the Americas region have the knowledge and/or research expertise to provide evidence-based leadership to national drug commissions, research centers or academia.

One successful strategy for closing some of the critical research gaps has been drug research training and capacity building among university faculty and senior professionals from government agencies. Such efforts are expected to serve as an antecedent for developing new drug policies as well as revising ineffective ones. Understanding the efficacy of policy level interventions and their multi-faceted impact on drugs in society, is indispensable to drug control and, by extension, crime and human security.

CICAD, in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Canadian Government, have developed a unique capacity-building program that meets the preceding aims. This joint program strengthens the research capability of health related professionals to effectively study the drug phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean. Full financial support has been provided by the Government of Canada, specifically the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) during the past nine years. Over ninety one health related professionals have been trained through this program from the following countries: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uruguay.

This supplement of the Text & Context Nursing Journal summarizes the findings from two multi-centric drug studies implemented in 11 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean by graduates from the 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 offerings of the program. The two multi-centric studies are *entitled* "The association between adult drug abuse and childhood maltreatment among students attending universities in Latin America and the Caribbean, from group 2010-2011"; and "The role of family relations, spirituality and entertainment in moderating the relationship between peer influence and drug use among university students in five countries of Latin America and three countries in the Caribbean", from group 2011-2012. These two studies bring to the forefront novel information about the association between adult drug abuse and childhood maltreatment as well as the relationship between drug use and abuse with family relations, spirituality, entertainment, and peer influence. There are few research studies touching on these areas in the Americas. The supplement includes a historical

article about the CICAD/CAMH – IRCBP program, two articles indicating the studies’ general findings, followed by several articles focusing on results from particular sites of the study. Its concludes with an article indicating the scientific contribution of Nursing Schools to the OAS/CICAD University Project in Latin America.

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