

EDITORIAL

The challenges, and unresolved public health problems, of the 21st century include complex issues regarding controlled substances. During the past few years, countries have been facing many difficulties when dealing with the control of production, transport and consumption of illicit and licit drugs. The consumption of drugs has become an important topic on international and national policy agendas for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean due in no small part to the social, economic, health and political consequences.¹

To address this situation, the members of the Organization of American States (OAS) created the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) in 1986. Ten years later, CICAD adopted the Anti-Drug Strategy in order to express the region's need for shared responsibility in dealing with drug issues in the Americas. This integrated approach has facilitated the design of international and national policies of shared interest to reduce the supply and consumption of drugs in the Americas. In Washington, DC, in May 2010, the CICAD/OAS approved a new version of the Anti-Drug Strategy entitled "Hemispheric Drug Strategy". This was adopted on June 5th, 2010 by the General Assembly of the OAS in its 40th regular session held in Lima, Peru. By May 2011, the CICAD/OAS, in Paramaribo/Suriname approved the "Plan of Action 2011-2015" for the new Hemispheric Drug Strategy.²

Around the world, governments are emphasizing the importance of developing initiatives to encourage drug abuse reduction, building human resources capacity for the promotion of healthy and sustainable lifestyles as well as to treat, rehabilitate, and promote social integration for those affected with drug abuse issues. Health related professionals are key actors to conduct research in this area and work at the frontline.

In 2003, ES/CICAD developed an advanced program entitled "International Research Capacity-Building Program for Health Related Professionals to Study Drug Issues in Latin America and the Caribbean" (IRCBP), which was initiated in partnership with the University of Alberta-Faculty of Nursing in Edmonton, Canada. Since 2006, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has assumed the partnership role with CICAD to offer this innovative capacity building initiative in Toronto/Canada. The program objectives are: (i) to prepare health related professionals with advance research skills to conduct drug demand studies according to country priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean; (ii) to use scientific evidence to support the development of drug policies, programs and projects; and (iii) to exchange knowledge and expertise between regional and Canadian researchers in terms of drug-related phenomenon. The CICAD-CAMH-IRCBP program has already trained more than 71 health related professionals in the following countries: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uruguay. The following academic areas have been represented in the program: medicine, public health, nursing, psychology, sociology, education, law, social work, etc.³

This supplement of the Text & Context Nursing Journal summarizes the findings from two multi-centric drug studies implemented by graduates from the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 program. The first study is entitled "Simultaneous Polydrug Consumption Among Undergraduate University Students in Six Latin American Countries and in One Caribbean Country: Gender, Social and Legal Implications". It brings to the forefront novel information regarding polydrug consumption among university students and the implications for gender, social and legal aspects in six countries of Latin America and one country in the Caribbean. This study is presented with an article containing general findings, followed by 9 specific articles focusing on results from various sites in the study.

The second study is entitled “Comorbidity Between Psychological Distress and Drug Abuse Among Patients in Treatment Centers in Seven Countries of Latin America and One in the Caribbean: Policy and Program Implications”. This groundbreaking study explores the situation of treatment centers dealing with comorbidity between psychological distress and drug abuse among patients treated in seven countries in Latin America and one country in the Caribbean. Findings are presented in a general article, followed by 10 specific articles containing information collected from different sites of the study.

This supplement has a total of 21 articles issued in Spanish, while English and Portuguese versions are available on-line at <http://scielo.br/tce>. In this way, the Text & Context Nursing Journal is contributing to the dissemination of new scientific knowledge in the field of demand reduction.

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