

**ICARA 2017 MEETING
SUMMARY**
Pan American Health Organization
Washington DC 20037



August 28 – 30, 2017

Tuesday Morning

The meeting was opened by Maristela Monteiro, who welcomed the attendees on behalf of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and INEBRIA LATINA. Twenty-five individuals participated, representing 17 societies and five organizations that fund or coordinate addiction research.

Tom Babor, President of ICARA, provided a brief overview of the aims of the meeting, which were to discuss capacity building in addiction science; share practical information among research society leaders; consider the issues, needs and accomplishments of addiction scientists in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean; and formulate a future agenda for ICARA. He welcomed the 20+ participants to the fourth meeting of ICARA since its inception.

Vladimir Poznyak (via video) provided the World Health Organization's (WHO's) perspective on global ATOD capacity building. In particular, he described WHO's work to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals to reduce non-communicable diseases worldwide, in part by reducing the harmful effects of alcohol and other psychoactive substances. From WHO's perspective, training of the addiction workforce is a high priority, including training for addiction scientists. Other priorities are the development of core competencies for training programs, and strengthening of research capacity in countries where there is an emerging need (see slides).

Ludovic Reveiz (PAHO) described how the scientific inquiry into questions concerning implementation of prevention and treatment programs is important for addiction science. The iPIER program was presented as an example of how implementation of research is being promoted in the Americas (see slides).

Luis Alfonzo (PAHO) provided an invited presentation "On the substance abuse problems in Latin America" as well as the public health response (see slides), which includes coordination of a multilateral public health strategy, and emphasizing health rights, community participation and the social determinants of substance-related problems.

Diana Rossi and Tom Babor described the results of an international survey conducted by ICARA in collaboration with PAHO (see attached report). The purpose of the survey was to describe the infrastructure supporting addiction science (including research on behavioral addictions) and the career opportunities available to addiction scientists in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean (see appendix to this report). Of the 95 eligible respondents, 51 (53.6%) completed the survey. Participants

represented 11 countries. According to the respondents, the research agenda is dominated by epidemiological, health services and policy research, with very little clinical and basic science research reported. This is consistent with the personal motivations stated, which include both “personal interest” as well as the more altruistic motives of addressing the “burden of illness” and dealing with social justice/equity. A variety of national and international funding sources were mentioned and the investigators also reported a high level of scientific productivity. Nevertheless, important challenges were reported including “lack of funds,” “lack of time” and “lack of trained researchers.” Based on the assumption that the findings accurately reflect the opinions of a prominent group of addiction scientists in the region, the report concludes that there is a need for international organizations, professional societies, government agencies, foundations and other organizations to promote the further development of addiction research in the region.

Panel Discussion: A Strategic panel discussion was devoted to “building research capacity in Latin America and further afield.” The panel was introduced by the Chilean representative, Alfredo Pemjean, and included Diana Rossi (Argentina), Luis Alfonzo (PAHO), Pernell Clarke (Organization of American States), and Luis Cuervo (PAHO). Each panelist described key challenges, developments, and ICARA’s possible role in building capacity.

- Regarding addiction research, Diana Rossi noted that human rights is a big issue in Argentina as well as in many other countries of Latin America. Some of the human rights topics that deserve special attention in the research agenda are gender issues, people assisted in drug treatment centers, and cannabis regulation in Uruguay.
- Luis Alfonzo said that many countries have national drug plans but they give no support to research. Perhaps ICARA could help fill the gap. Governments need independent advice.
- Luis Cuervo suggested the need to integrate research within policies. There is a disconnect between the current research agenda and the predominance of funding based on a reductionist approach. Knowledge translation is needed to inform policymakers, along with organized databases for policies and research on health systems. ICARA could bring stakeholders together to align the research and policy agendas.
- Pernell Clarke (OAS OID/CICAD) described CICAD’s role in setting up National Drugs Observatories, as well as national Drug Information Networks (DIN) and the Network of Latin American Researchers (REDLA). He said that ICARA can help by identifying a larger pool of skilled researchers, supporting policy research, evaluation, and publications; and by supporting countries in the process of moving from research to policy to practice (see slides).
- In Chile, the main issues are road safety enforcement, screening in primary health care, and alcohol sales to minors. There is a need for an inventory of research conducted in the region. NGOs need to be engaged, taking a consumer perspective to research.

Tuesday Afternoon

The capacity building theme was continued with reports on training programs and education initiatives for addiction research.

- Representing Dr. Sungsoo Chun, Miriam Sunmee Yun-Welch, from the Korean Institute on Alcohol Problems, described activities being conducted by KIAP and Sahmyook University in collaboration with ICARA. These activities include training workshops in screening and brief intervention in Korea and other Asian countries. KIAP and Sahmyook University are supporting clean campus initiatives (alcohol/tobacco bans) and an Asia- Pacific Academic Consortium for

public health. KIAP's Global Addiction Specialist Course was very successful, as well as their NEWSTART high school intervention program and their student study visits for prevention training in Slovenia (40-44 hours, 18/12 students) which was facilitated by ICARA.

- Tom Babor, Matej Kosir (UTRIP, Slovenia), and Niamh Fitzgerald described recent developments in training and education programs, including certificates, diplomas and degrees in addiction studies that have begun to be offered by institutions of higher learning around the world. Niamh Fitzgerald described the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies (www.ukctas.net), which includes the University of Stirling. It is a virtual centre of excellence made up of a consortium of 13 universities conducting research on tobacco and alcohol. The teaching and public engagement activities of UKCTAS focus on clinical and policy aspects of alcohol, tobacco and nicotine research and include annual training courses. Niamh Fitzgerald also described her involvement in writing new training manuals and conducting workshops on alcohol brief interventions in the primary care and trauma settings for the WHO Regional Office for Europe.
- Alfredo Pemjean (Chile) suggested that ICARA could facilitate research in Latin America by identifying research topics that would be attractive to funding agencies; organizing national and multi-national seminars with researchers, oriented to facilitate mutual knowledge and eventually coordinated work; advocate for the inclusion of an evaluation component in any health program; to coordinate capacity building efforts (e.g., Slovenia, Connecticut, Stirling University) in regions where there are training needs.
- Jules Netherland described the activities of the Addiction Theory Network, which is a group of addiction scientists who are critical of the "Brain Disease Model of Addiction." Their public education activities are addressed at the research priorities in the field, the policy responses, and challenges in training and education
- The demand for education and training is likely to grow. ICARA and its constituent societies have a role to play in educating the workforce in relation to evidence-based practice, research capability, and policy.

Reports from various research societies were provided by representatives from Nigeria, Australia and the USA. CRISA, an addiction science-oriented NGO in Nigeria is receiving support for some of its activities from the EU. Lynda Berends, representing the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs, provided an overview of APSAD. Loretta Finnegan, representing the College on Problems of Drug Dependence, provided an introduction to CPDD. Kenny Sher described the activities of the Research Society on Alcoholism. All of these society representatives described ways that the scientific community can advocate for research funding at the national level.

Discussion was focused on successful and not successful advocacy, what research organizations do, how they do it and what they lobby for. The larger societies like RSA and CPDD have talking points to convince legislators to fund research, have a well informed lobbyist to track the appropriations process within the Federal bureaucracy, have a membership group of scientists dedicated to advocacy efforts to meet regularly with lobbyist; mobilize members when necessary, choose issues wisely, and collaborate with other societies.

Wednesday Morning

Continuing the discussion of research funding, various speakers described advocacy at the level of the European Union, funding opportunities for international research.

Carol Johnstone of the University of Stirling presented the Global Challenges Research Fund, which provides funding for research studies that involve UK researchers in partnership with LMIC countries as part of the UK's Official Development Assistance. She noted that Prof. Linda Bauld (at the University of Stirling) has recently secured >£3M for a research study focusing on tobacco in several LMIC.

Antoni Gual, President of EUFAS, gave a European perspective on "Funding Opportunities for Alcohol Research." He explained that the mission of the European Federation with its member societies and addiction research in Europe is to reinforce addiction research in Europe, improve and harmonize prevention and treatment and promote policies based on evidence. Despite EUFAS' advocacy for research funding, politicians in Europe do not seem to be supportive.

Ralph Hingson described NIAAAs research priorities and international funding possibilities of the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Funding mechanisms exist for international research and collaborative investigators. He then described the priorities of the Division of Epidemiology in the following terms: study the effects of alcohol policies on alcohol misuse and related problems and the use of other psychoactive substances (e.g., study effects of legalizing recreational marijuana use on marijuana use, other drug use, and alcohol misuse); continue to evaluate the effects of multi-component interventions to reduce alcohol misuse and related harms; compare the effects of alcohol use alone and used simultaneously with drugs on unintentional injuries, intentional injuries; explore ways to prevent these behaviors and related problems; examine the predictors, consequences, and how to prevent extreme binge drinking at 2-3 and 3+ times the age/gender-specific thresholds.

Dr Carla Saenz described PAHO's activities to promote ethical research and human rights. The following activities were described: Help countries develop/revise normative and regulatory frameworks for research; build capacity (mostly indirectly) to conduct thorough ethics analysis of research; develop and provide guidance on research ethics; advocate and establish consensus (to adhere to international ethical guidelines); support ethics review process (ProEthos) to enhance transparency, efficiency and standards.

Wednesday Afternoon

Peter Reuter and Tom Babor initiated a discussion of a recent editorial in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, which raised serious scientific and human rights questions about the "war on drugs" being conducted by Philippines' President Duterte. The editorial called on ICARA and other scientific societies to inform the public about the use of policy science in the development of governmental responses to drug epidemics. It was agreed that ICARA's Board would work with the International Society of Drug Policy in developing a plan that could be used to raise awareness of the harms resulting from unscientific approaches to drug policy. This could take the form of monitoring the situation in the Philippines and elsewhere, preparing an expert committee report, and circulating a petition signed by leading scientists.

Niamh Fitzgerald and Tom Babor presented the revised draft of ICARA's "Declaration of Principles and Guidelines for the Management of Relationships with Organizations with Vested Interests." Following discussion and comments from Dr. Saenz it was agreed that Dr. Saenz would send on some suggested text to improve the consideration of broader ethical issues in the documents. Niamh Fitzgerald will edit the files and circulate to the ICARA board for final comment. The drafts will then be circulated to ICARA

members for discussion and feedback. The hope would be to sign off the final documents at the ICARA AGM in 2018

Andrea Mitchell, representing the Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists, described the defunding and destruction of specialized addiction libraries in the US and other parts of the world. One solution is the SALIS Collection, a partnership between SALIS and the Internet Archive, featuring books and other documents of significance to the ATOD field, with books from North America, Europe, and Australia, in English and other languages. Once digitized, anyone can "check out" a digital copy of a book and read it online. The SALIS Collection currently holds over 1,400 books and government digital documents, with hundreds more in the pipeline awaiting digitization. The project needs financial support. Information about a crowdfunding initiative can be found on the SALIS website (<http://www.salis.org>).

Tom Babor provided a summary of ICARAs activities in workforce development, education activities and advocacy for research funding. A Memorandum of Agreement between KIAP and ICARA was signed to facilitate the development of international training activities in screening and brief intervention.

The next meeting of ICARA will be held in Prague, Czech Republic, in 2018 prior to the ISAJE meeting (August 27-28). Tom Babor thanked PAHO for their generous support of the 2017 ICARA meeting.

Attendants of the ICARA meeting, Washington DC, August 28-30, 2017

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