



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



52nd DIRECTING COUNCIL

65th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

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Provisional Agenda Item 7.4

CD52/INF/4 (Eng.)

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ORIGINAL: SPANISH

E. PLAN OF ACTION ON PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE USE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Background

1. Technical cooperation to address this public health problem in the Region is based on the Strategy on Substance Use and Public Health (Document CD50/18, Rev. 1 and Resolution CD50.R2 [2010]) (1, 2), and on the Plan of Action on Psychoactive Substance Use and Public Health (Document CD51/9 and Resolution CD51.R7 [2011]) (3, 4), adopted by the PAHO Directing Council as a complement to the Strategy and Plan of Action on Mental Health (2009) (5, 6) and to the Hemispheric Drug Strategy (OAS/CICAD, 2010)¹ (7).

2. At the Forty-third General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), held in Guatemala in June 2013, the Member States approved the “Declaration of Antigua Guatemala” (8), which emphasizes the role of public health in a comprehensive approach to addressing the world drug problem.

Progress Report

3. The Member States have made progress in recognizing the impact of psychoactive substance use on population health (7-10). However, in many countries, this recognition has not led to an increase or improvement in services, and a wide treatment gap persists. Primary health care still plays a very limited role in early identification, treatment, and counseling for people with substance abuse problems. Specialized services are limited and in many cases are based on inappropriate therapy models or internment in asylums.

¹ Approved in May 2010 by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS/CICAD).

4. PAHO has provided technical cooperation to the countries, both directly and within the framework of regional and subregional initiatives of the OAS, the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the Meeting of the Health Sector of Central America and the Dominican Republic (RESSCAD)² (10, 11).

5. One example of country cooperation is the national workshops held in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama with PAHO support, in which ministries of health and national drug enforcement agencies, as well as representatives of other sectors and civil society participated in order to further the public health approach in national plans and, especially, strengthen the role of the ministries of health.

6. PAHO is conducting a systematic review of the effectiveness of public health interventions that address the problem of substance use,³ to be published and presented before the end of this year.

7. PAHO has participated in expert groups with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), (12) the World Health Organization (WHO),⁴ and the Cooperation Programme between Latin America and the European Union on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD) (13).

8. The PAHO courses on brief interventions (14) and drug policy (15) are available to the Member States through the Virtual Campus for Public Health. A course on integrated primary health care services has also been offered in collaboration with COPOLAD.⁵

² SICA Summit of Presidents of Central America: “New paths against drug trafficking” (Guatemala, 2012); Summit of Presidents and Heads of State (Cartagena, 2012); Agreement on “Advances in Comprehensive Addiction Care in PHC,” adopted at the XXVIII RESSCAD (Dominican Republic 2012); *The Drug Problem in the Americas* (OAS, 2013); Tenth Hemispheric Forum with Civil Society and Social Actors (OAS, 2013); 43rd OAS General Assembly (Guatemala, 2013); “Declaration of Antigua Guatemala” (Guatemala, 2013).

³ Report in preparation.

⁴ Guidelines for managing the use of psychoactive substances and associated disorders during pregnancy (WHO) (In development.)

⁵ Online course on comprehensive integrated social assistance and health care for drug dependency, with a primary care approach, offered by PAHO in collaboration with COPOLAD. The first cycle (2012) was attended by 59 students from 14 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay). The second cycle is in development.

9. PAHO has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD).⁶ This is an important strategic partnership that will support actions agreed upon at the country level between national drug enforcement commissions and the health sector. PAHO is also advancing in the implementation of the Regional Strategy and Plan of Action with COPOLAD⁷ and civil society organizations working on the issue at the national and regional levels.⁸

Recommended Measures to Improve the Situation

10. PAHO should intensify its efforts to assist the Member States in the approval or review of drug policies, plans, and laws to ensure that they incorporate the public health approach and promote respect for human rights.

11. PAHO and its Member States should engage in a concerted capacity-building initiative to intensify an integrated response targeting users of psychoactive substances in the health care and social protection systems. PAHO should facilitate mechanisms that enable the Member States to share experiences.

12. The Member States should allocate resources on the basis of identified needs, with special attention to high-risk groups such as the indigent population, prisoners, sex workers, injecting drug users, children, and adolescents.

13. PAHO and its Member States should continue efforts to strengthen information and surveillance systems, improve epidemiological information, increase survey coverage of marginalized populations and other vulnerable groups, and use the social determinants approach for data analysis and programs.

14. PAHO, with the participation of its Member States, should update the information on programs, services, and resources in the Region focused on the prevention and treatment of substance-related disorders (16).

Action by the Directing Council

15. The Directing Council is requested to take note of this progress report and offer any recommendations it may have.

⁶ In addition to the memorandum, PAHO helped prepare the report “The Drug Problem in the Americas;” organized the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking with CICAD; and participated in expert groups on information systems, social integration, and court-supervised treatment options.

⁷ PAHO participates in the COPOLAD components related to human resource training, research, and the improvement of information systems.

⁸ Youth integration centers (ICJs) in Mexico, the Ibero-American network of NGOs working on drug dependency issues (RIOD), and Intercambios (civil society organization) in Argentina, among others.

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