

IDHDP Newsletter

Volume 13

April 2013



our aims

increase the participation of
medical doctors in drug policy reform

Welcome to the April 2013 issue, particular welcome to our new members and readers.

Highlights:

- IDHDP news
- In the news
- New publications on the website
- Uncoming events
- Membership
- IDHDP communications

IDHDP news

What effect drug policy has on treatment and why we need to be involved

Chris Ford outlines in SMMGP's March 2013 newsletter the effects of failed drug policies on health and argues that doctors have an important role in shaping and influencing a healthier approach to drug policy.

Cameron Douglas Loses Sentencing Appeal in U.S. Federal Court

IDHDP joined this case as an amicus curiae because of the harsh sentence Mr. Douglas received for possession of drugs in prison and because it highlights the dearth of drug treatment services available in U.S. prisons. While we're disappointed with the result, the appellate judges in this case now join a growing chorus of jurists across the country who voice deep dissatisfaction with U.S. drug laws and who are urging Congress to rethink America's drug policies.

In the news

Blueprint for a Public Health and Safety Approach to Drug Policy

"For decades, New York State has expended significant resources on drug use prevention, interdiction, and incarceration with relatively modest effect in stopping drug use or reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with it." The New York Academy of Medicine and Drug Policy Alliance in their new report, call for a paradigm shift to "a coordinated, evidence-based, and cost-efficient approach that reduces the harms of both drug use and our drug policies, while improving the health and safety of communities across the state."

The New York Times Editorial Board cites the Blueprint in "The Next Step in Drug Treatment"

"The country is beginning to realize that it cannot enforce or imprison its way out of the addiction problem. But to create broadly accessible and effective treatment strategies for the millions of people who need them, it must abandon the "drug war" approach to addiction that has dominated the national discourse in favor of a policy that treats addiction as a public health issue. To create broadly accessible and effective treatment strategies for the millions of people who need them, it must abandon the "drug war" approach to addiction that has dominated the national discourse in favor of a policy that treats addiction as a public health issue."

Drug Policy Reform In Action: A 21st Century Approach

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Director, Gil Kerlikowske touts the U.S.'s latest drug control strategy as a "21st Century Approach to drug policy reform" in the Huff Post blog.

Read the newly released **U.S. Drug Strategy** and tell us what you think on our **forums**. And see 100 American celebrities who unite to call for an end to the war on drugs, **here**.

Cannabis to substitute crack

The mayor of Bogota has recently proposed a new pilot to treat crack-dependant users with marijuana substitution therapy.

In a class of their own

Dr Mary Hepburn (IDHDP member) cites class differences to explain the exclusion of vulnerable women from mainstream antenatal care: "Services were all designed for middle-class women."

Addiction's Shrinking Gender Gap

Article in The Fix, "All over the world, women have always had lower rates of addiction than men. But when women gain more rights as nations grow richer, they begin to catch up; in one drug type, they're already ahead."

New Publications on the IDHDP website

New documents uploaded this month (click on the document title to read the full publication):

MEDICAL PRACTICE

Prescription drugs

First do no harm: Responding to Canada's prescription drug crisis

"The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), in partnership with the National Advisory Council (NAC) on Prescription Drug Misuse, has released a comprehensive 10-year strategy. Which highlights the action required to address the harms associated with prescription drugs in Canada in the areas of prevention, education, treatment, monitoring and surveillance, and enforcement."

Access to Analgesics and to Other Controlled Medications

"WHO have developed the Access to Controlled Medications Programme (ACMP) in consultation with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). The Programme aims to improve legitimate medical access to all medications controlled under the drug conventions."

Drug treatment

Drug users need more choices at addiction treatment facilities

"The brothers Arash and Kamiar Alaei—internationally celebrated doctors who advanced treatment for drug users in Iran but were imprisoned, to the vociferous protest of the international medical community (BMJ 2009;338:b109, doi:10.1136/bmj.b109)—set out their experiences and hopes for harm reduction." In another personal view in BMJ.

DRUG POLICY

Portugal Bans Legal Highs

"Following the example of many other EU member states, Portugal has recently approved a restrictive law on legal highs – threatening to push the use of new psychoactive substances into the shadows."

International seminar in Mexico about new focuses in drug policy

International drug policy experts gathered in the Mexican Parliament (Cámara de Diputados) to reopen the debate during the international seminar: Regulation and Legislation: New focuses in Drug Policy. Read the blog from Cavazos He Arozqueta.

ECDC report on its country visit to Finland in October 2012

It provides an overview of Finland's national strategies and programmes for HIV and sexually

transmitted diseases.

A few highlights:

- Prevention and care need to be adapted to a changed HIV epidemiology. Most infections seem to now occur among heterosexuals, either migrants coming from high-prevalence countries or Finnish nationals with travel-associated HIV infections.
- Late diagnosis is frequent in all sub-populations.
- It should be considered whether harm reduction would be expanded by providing clean injection rooms in low-threshold health service centres for IDUs
- It is suggested that it should be considered whether substitution treatment could be started in prison

Promoting abstinence for drug users is about saving money not science

Jason Luty UK consultant psychiatrist, writes a personal view in the BMJ that "Despite overwhelming evidence that substitution therapy reduces harm, the UK government now advocates abstinence." He also states that: "It has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt that opioid substitution reduces drug use and crime and improves physical and mental health and social functioning". His comments about collecting of unnecessary data are also welcome: "We should abolish this time wasting control freakery and needless bureaucracy. The only function of this sort of nonsense is to keep policy writers and bureaucrats in employment at taxpayers' expense."

Rapid Response: Promoting abstinence for drug users is about saving money not science

A rapid response to Dr. Luty's personal view from Dr Andrew Byrne, an addiction treatment physician from Australia."

Advocacy

Bob Newman is Retiring, But You Haven't Heard the Last From Him

Addiction Treatment Forum highlights the extraordinary work of Dr. Robert Newman, Director of the International Center for Advancement of Addiction Treatment (and IDHDP member).

HIV/AIDS, HCV and TB

Unsafe injection practices in Hodeidah governorate, Yemen

This study by Mohammed Abdu Akbar, et al. "revealed several unsafe practices, particularly the recapping of needles after use, which occurred in 61.1% and 36.8% of the observations in the hospitals and the health centers, respectively."

Landmark study calls for greater investment in evidence-based healthcare and harm reduction initiatives for injection drug users in Thailand to save lives, prevent HIV infections

"A new study from the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BCCfE), Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group (TTAG) and Thailand's Mitsampan Community Research Project, finds the Thai government's longstanding war-on-drugs, involving the mass incarceration of people who use drugs, has failed to suppress the availability and use of illegal drugs in the country."

Newsletters and Websites of Interest

Intercambios April Newsletter

The Intercambios April Newsletter is available in Spanish and English. This issue highlights, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Drugs, HIV and civil society in Vienna, the 'new voice of drug policy' and much more.

MENAHRA April Newsletter

Middle East & North Africa Harm Reduction Association April Newsletter.

Talking Drugs website

Visit Talking Drugs' updated website

Upcoming events

When attending conferences and meetings, please spread the word about IDHDP. Feel free to use IDHDP's **presentation slide** and the **membership flyer** in your presentations and conversations.

Leading the way: toward a public health and safety approach to drug policy in New York State (2 – 3 May 2013), Buffalo, New York, US

The conference objective is to examine the current national landscape and emerging developments in drug policy, criminal justice, and health, including the growing bipartisan opposition to mass incarceration and support for alternatives to incarceration; the implementation of the Affordable Care Act; and the 2012 elections, wherein citizens in Colorado and Washington voted to end marijuana prohibition in those states.

Global Addiction and Europad Joint Conference 2013 (7 -10 May), Pisa, Italy

Many IDHDP members will be attending and presenting papers at this conference. IDHDP's paper, "**The mass criminalization of people who use drugs and Hepatitis C: what can we do about countries' national policies that are silently killing people who use drugs**" will be presented by **Dr Juliet Bressan on May 10 at 2 PM.**

18th National Conference: Managing drug & alcohol problems in primary care (May 16-17th 2013), Birmingham, UK

Great UK conference but be sure to catch Professor Graham Foster on the future of Hepatitis C, legal highs by Dr Owen Bowden-Jones and the Plenary Debate: "This house believes this is not the right time for the decriminalisation of drugs" with debate panelists to include Steve Rolles, Senior Policy Analyst, Transform Drug Policy Foundation and Dr Neil McKeganey, Founder, Centre for Drugs Misuse Research, Scotland

ISSDP seventh conference (15 -17 May 2013), Bogota, Columbia

The International Society for the Study of Drug Policy's 2013 conference will focus on "Collateral costs of illegal drugs and the war on drugs: violence, corruption and institutional instability." Great conference for the research of drug policy.

International Harm Reduction Conference 2013 (9 – 12 June 2013) Vilnius, Lithuania

This conference is a key event for all those interested in harm reduction around the world. It will include high profile keynote speeches, plenary, major, and concurrent sessions, workshops and a film festival. The theme of the conference is, "The Value/s of Harm Reduction."

IDHDP Workshop: Dr. Sharon Stancliff (IDHDP Advisory Board) and Holly Catania (IDHDP Director) are conducting a workshop, "**A Roadmap for Overdose Prevention Policies: Where do you fit?**" **on June 12 from 14:00 – 15:30.** It aims to provide pragmatic tools for doctors to engage in advocacy with policy makers.

IDHDP Members: Let us know if you are attending the conference, and the titles and times of any papers and/or posters you are presenting and we will post the information to other IDHDP members. Please send the information to **rebecca**.

7th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (30 June – 3 July 2013) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The event is being organized by the International AIDS Society in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS (CERiA), University of Malaya. The conference will include special sessions on HIV/AIDS and drug policy. More information on those sessions to come.

Jubilee Conference ISGF (9 -13 September 2013), Zurich, Switzerland

The Swiss Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction at Zurich University's (ISGF) international conference will focus on the current major problems in the orientation of addiction research.

International City Health 2013 Conference (4 – 5 November 2013), Glasgow, Scotland

This international event will examine current policy and practice in relation to public health in cities.

Prof Michel Kazatchkine, IDHDP patron and UN special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe, will present the public lecture on Monday, Nov. 4. Chris Ford will also give a presentation "Urbanization: the new challenge for addiction and how primary care can help."

Save the date! Join us there and meet Michel Kazatchkine.

This is only a selection of events. To view more visit the [website](#).

Membership

Our membership continues to grow. We now have members in **62 countries!**

We encourage members to tap into our rich database of international experts. If you would like advice on clinical or policy issues, please post on the members discussion forum or send your query to **Rebecca** who will send on to the appropriate experts.

IDHDP communications

Twitter

Follow us on **Twitter**. We now have over **950 followers!** If you are a member of Twitter please search for us at **@idhdp**, or if you do not wish to join Twitter, you can check the **IDHDP home page** to read our latest tweets.

Facebook

Like the **IDHDP Facebook page** to receive updates on your Facebook news feed. This is also a great way to share articles and information with your Facebook friends.

Newsletter

Please send the newsletter on to your colleagues and encourage them to join IDHDP.

All the very best,

Chris, Holly and Rebecca

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