

# IDHDP Newsletter

## Volume 15

### June 2013



our aims

increase the participation of  
medical doctors in drug policy reform

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

Highlights:

- The Future of IDHDP
- Harm Reduction 2013 Conference Highlights
- In the News
- New publications on the website
- Upcoming events
- IDHDP communications

#### **The Future of IDHDP**

During the past month we have been overwhelmed by the support we have received from the membership, Advisory Board, Patrons, and partner organisations, who feel very strongly about the need for a united doctors' voice on drug policy reform.

We announced the closure of the programme due to not obtaining our core funding for next year. However, we have now seen the tremendous goodwill that exists. Members and friends have stepped forward to assist in finding a way through this funding difficulty, including a person with a strong track record of fundraising in the drugs field, who has agreed to volunteer their time.

The next few months will focus on the work plan, whilst maintaining our services such as website, social media and newsletter. Chris and Rebecca will volunteer their time this summer to make this possible and to ensure that what has become such a useful tool in the fight for drug policy reform remains active.

We have received a small donation which will help cover the website and administrative costs.

We would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you and good bye to Holly Catania for the work that she has done for IDHDP over the past two years and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

#### **Harm Reduction 2013 Conference Highlights by Holly Catania**

Congratulations to the staff of Harm Reduction International on their excellent 23rd International Harm Reduction Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania earlier this month.

The theme "Value(s) of Harm Reduction" was reflected throughout in the representations of personal, political and regional identity, health, drug policy, drug use, criminalization, harm reduction, advocacy, and inclusion. The humbling and inspiring presentations from harm reduction workers in far corners of cities and villages across the world, rousing plenaries and debates, confessions of prohibitionist politicians and police turned drug policy reformers, the

many hallway meetings and special sessions, and debut of Naloxone Ninja and the first global overdose prevention information website, was worth the two year wait!

I definitely left the conference with more than I came with. Thank you, Pettus Family Foundation and Open Society Foundations for getting me to the conference. And last but not least, congratulations to Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, this year's International Rolleston Award winner and Loon Gangte as the Carol and Travis Jenkins Award Winner.

### **IDHDP Workshop: A roadmap for overdose prevention policies: where do you fit?**

Holly Catania and Dr. Sharon Stancliff co-led a "low threshold" drug policy advocacy workshop on the final day of the conference. The conference was rich with overdose sessions; there were 4 in total, including the launch of OSF's **Naloxone Info website**, and the launch of UNODC and WHO's discussion paper **Opioid overdose: preventing and reducing opioid overdose mortality** available in English and Russian.

The workshop focused on how to engage in different types of policy advocacy in areas where opioid overdose is a problem. The participants brought a variety of policy issues from diverse areas including N.E India, Albania, Scotland, and Indonesia and discussed possible actions they could take, from collaborating with lawyers and family members to change the laws that are obstacles for easy access to the medication, to investigating where naloxone is already available in the region, i.e. in operating rooms, emergency departments, pharmacies, and assessing the feasibility of switching from injectable to inhalable naloxone where injectables are an issue.

### **Some Highlights from the conference (films):**

- [Former President of Poland Alexander Kwasniewski speaking at the opening session of the 23rd International Harm Reduction Conference](#)
- [Former President of Switzerland Ruth Dreifuss, at the opening session of the 23rd International Harm Reduction Conference](#)
- [Eliot Albers, executive director of the International Network of People who Use Drugs, at the opening session of the 23rd International Harm Reduction Conference](#)
- ["We are all harm reductionists and drug policy reformers" speech by Ethan Nadelmann, Executive Director, Drug Policy Alliance](#)
- [Closing plenary video message from Stephen Lewis, co-founder and co-director of AIDS Free World](#)
- [The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union conference overview video from the 23rd International Harm Reduction Conference](#)

Images from the conference can be found on the [HRI website](#).

### **In the news**

#### **Harm reduction more effective than war on drugs: 15-year study**

Editorial in CTV News reports that "harm reduction - not a war on drugs - has reduced illicit drug use and improved public safety in what was once Ground Zero for an HIV and overdose epidemic that cost many lives"

#### **Beyond the Hype: PrEP for People Who Inject Drugs**

Editorial by Daniel Wolfe Director of the International Harm Reduction Development Program, Open Society Foundations on his view of the Bangkok Tenofovir Study conducted on a population of injection drug users in Thailand.

#### **New Zealand law permits 'low risk' designer drugs**

Editorial reporting on New Zealand "adopting a new law permitting the limited sale of some designer drugs for recreational purposes. The legislation is the first in the world to regulate new recreational drugs based on scientific evidence of their risk of harm."

### **Americas: Decriminalise Personal Use of Drugs**

"Human Rights Watch's global research has found that the criminalization of drug use has undermined the right to health."

### **Drug War Blocking Potential Treatments for Cancer, Alzheimer's, Journal**

**Claims**"potential treatments for Alzheimer's disease, cancer and many other illnesses are being blocked by anti-drug laws, according to a new editorial review published in Nature Reviews Neuroscience. Lead author David Nutt, chair of Neuropsychopharmacology at Imperial College London, and his colleagues argue that tight restrictions on research on illegal drugs like marijuana and "legal highs" are hindering progress in neuroscience and deterring drug companies from pursuing important leads in major disorders affecting millions of patients." David also states that "People have not even realized how much research and how many possible new treatments have been blocked by drug laws."

## **New publications on the website**

### **MEDICAL PRACTICE**

#### **The management of pain in people with a past or current history of addiction**

Endorsed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists warns that "current and former addicts are at risk of relapse to addiction, compromised medical care and potentially fatal overdose when being treated for pain in hospitals and doctors' surgeries and identifies the stigma surrounding addiction as the main barrier to safe and effective pain relief."

We know individuals with a history of addiction, inappropriate pain management can have very serious consequences. The team working on this very useful resource first undertook an initial search of scientific literature and it rapidly became apparent that this is a topic on which there are many published opinions and several published consensus guidelines, but very little high-grade evidence (that is evidence from randomised, controlled studies, or consistent observational studies).

The topic is also broad in scope, involving lines of evidence from neurosciences and epidemiology, and experience of recovering individuals and practitioners. As there are more guidelines in preparation, the steering group agreed that the critical issue which needed to be addressed was the barriers to delivery of safe and effective pain management in current and recovering addicts. This is what this document sets out to address and we feel does it well, resulting in a resource that is brief and grounded in case studies and discussion of actual situations, to help illustrate the complex interplay of factors.

#### **Acute and chronic Pain relief in current or former addicts**

Presentation from Dr James Bell, King's College London's National Addiction Centre at the launch of "the management of pain in people with a past or current history of addiction" report.

#### **Safe opioid prescribing in community and secure environment settings**

Presentation from Dr Cathy Stannard, University of Bristol at the launch of "the management of pain in people with a past or current history of addiction" report.

The guidance of "Management of Pain in secure environments" is due for publication in July and it will be included in our next edition of the newsletter.

### **DRUG POLICY**

#### **Public Health Perspectives for Regulating Psychoactive Substances: What we can do about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs**

Health Officers' Council of British Columbia (HOC) has produced a paper describing "how inadequate, inappropriate, and ineffective regulation of these substances contributes in large

measure to this terrible toll. The law is a powerful tool for protecting and improving health, and failure to use the law appropriately is contributing to many substance-associated problems. The paper describes the failures and harms caused by implementation of the prohibition policy, and points out that the current prohibition policy is unsustainable."

### **Organization of American States' report: The Drug Problem in the Americas**

A groundbreaking high level discussion of what alternatives to drug prohibition may look like. Among the report's conclusions is the need for a "public health approach" to address drug problems - and that "the decriminalization of drug use needs to be considered as a core element in any public health strategy."

### **Podcast: David Nutt, 'The current laws on drugs and alcohol – ineffective, dishonest and unethical?'**

Professor David Nutt argues that whilst the use of the law to control drug use is long established, it remains unproven in efficacy

### **Advocacy**

#### **Reaching drug users: a toolkit for outreach workers**

"This toolkit was developed in line with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance's Good Practice Guide on HIV and Drug Use: Community responses to injecting drug use. It is aimed at services in developing countries but has information that may be useful for any outreach service and focuses particularly on reducing the harms associated with drug use and offering routes into drug treatment services."

### **Synthetic Drugs**

#### **Synthetic drug production in Europe**

This report by EMCDDA describes and analysis the current trends in illicit synthetic drug production in Europe and some of the challenges faced by law enforcement in this regard."

#### **Law reform issues regarding synthetic drugs in New South Wales**

The New South Wales Parliament Legal Affairs Committee recommended in this briefing that the "NSW Government develop a public awareness campaign to educate the community about synthetic drugs. In addition, the Committee has recommended the development of a tailored government website, which would publicise warnings about synthetic drugs as they are identified and allow the public to provide information to government agencies about synthetic drug products being sold in the community."

### **HIV/AIDS, HCV and TB**

#### **Hepatitis C Virus Infection in Young Persons Who Inject Drugs**

This paper is a conclusion of a two day meeting held by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy. The consultation participants recommended several key public health actions including:

- "Create community-led education and messaging strategies on hepatitis C risks, injection transmission risks (e.g., sharing drug preparation equipment in addition to sharing drug injection equipment), and HCV testing resources.
- Improve and increase infrastructure for HCV surveillance and data collection."

#### **IAS Annual Report (2012)**

The International AIDS Society's (IAS) annual report reflects their work in "2012 across the goals and foundations of the IAS Strategic Plan 2010-2014. It also contains the audited financial statements for the IAS in 2012 and for the XIX International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2012)."

Although a useful report it does reflect how little of IAS work is directed to HIV in people who

inject drugs. There is little mention of this group and in the conference section the one mention is of a side meeting of 200 (out of over 22,000) delegates on "Twin Epidemics of HIV and Drug Use: Innovative Strategies for Healthy Communities".

Douglas Kamerow's writes an observational editorial in the BMJ "[The myth of an AIDS free world](#)"

### ***Healthcare in Prisons***

#### **Promoting health in prison - British Medical Journal (BMJ)**

Editorial in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) investigates "how prisons contain some of the most disadvantaged people but they can also provide opportunities to improve their health and early intervention could help them to keep them out of prison. 62% of prisoners in UK are on directly observed therapy (For TB) were homeless on release, with less than half completing a full course of treatment."

#### **The Insider Story on prison health**

'Editor's choice' in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) relating to the above editorial.

#### **Needle and syringe programs in prison: it can be done (film)**

L'Association des intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec (AITQ) have produced an educational film for managers and stakeholders planning activities for health advocacy and harm reduction in prisons because the use of drugs by injection is one of the main causes of the increase of blood-borne diseases.

### ***Other newsletters and websites of interest***

#### **Naloxone info**

This new site dedicated to naloxone for use in preventing overdose from opioids. Contains advice, case studies and how to run an overdoes prevention programme etc

#### **IDPC May Alert International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)**

June alert includes their activities, publications and news.

#### **International Harm Reduction Development Program Quarterly Update**

News briefs on big developments in global harm reduction and the work of the International Harm Reduction Development Program at the Open Society Foundations.

### **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.*

#### **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.

Sessions on HIV/AIDS and drug policy (select title for further information):

- [Evidence-Based Drug Policies for an Effective HIV Response](#)
- [Community Forum: 'Building Partnerships between the Community and Scientists to Strengthen the Response to HIV'](#)
- [IAS Members' Meeting at IAS 2013: 'None Left Behind' – the IAS's Work with Key Affected Populations](#)

- [High Level Panel on Drug Policies and Public Health](#)

### **3rd Int. Symposium on Hepatitis Care in Substance Users. (5 - 6 September 2013), Munich, Germany**

The symposium is organized by the International Network on Hepatitis in Substance Users (INHSU) to cover the latest advances on the management and treatment of viral hepatitis among people who use drugs.

### **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 Drug Policy Reform Conference 2013 (23 - 26 October 2013), Denver, USA**

This biennial event brings together people from around the world who believe that the war on drugs is doing more harm than good. Attended by over 1,000 delegates representing 30 different countries.

### **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](#).**

## **IDHDP communications**

### **Twitter**

Follow us on [Twitter](#). We now have over **1140 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.

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