

## **Galicia document on problems related to addictive disorders in Europe**

### **I European Symposium on Clinical Problems of Addictive Disorders Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 2002**

There is an increase in prevalence of substance abuse and dependence disorders in all European countries, and Addictive Disorders represent a heavy burden on the affected individuals, their families and on society across Europe. However, research is sparse and there is insufficient dialogue between different professional groups working in related areas. Major advances are occurring in our understanding in some of the areas of research but they are not integrated into the wider examination of addictive behaviours and evidence from research is not effectively translated into clinical practice and political decisions.

Strengthened research of Addictive Disorders in the European context will lead to better understanding of the underlying problems, the development of more effective evidence-based treatments, and a model for improved integration of diverse perspectives influencing individual, developmental and wider societal and cultural influences on the emergence of drug problems and associated harms in Europe. This broader scope would cover, for example, new molecular genetic work, neurobiological and psychological investigations, comorbid psychopathology, and the interaction of these individual factors with socio-cultural influences including varying legal contexts.

There are already different institutions, organisations and scientific societies across Europe who are addressing partial aspects of this area. Our intention is not to replace or duplicate their work. Rather, it is our aim to add a comprehensive European dimension, bearing in mind also the enlargement of the EU, and to be a forum for fostering communication and cross-fertilisation between basic scientist and clinicians; epidemiology and public health, to help policy- and decision-makers. This would allow clarifying together differences and similarities across drugs, alcohol and tobacco; similarities and differences across European countries to facilitate cross-national research and to make possible the elaboration of effective and practical treatment protocols and guides.

We conclude that there is a need for a European College on Addiction Sciences to

---

Address for reprints: Icro Maremmiani, MD; Department of Psychiatry, Neurobiology, Pharmacology and Biotechnologies - University of Pisa, Via Roma 67 - 56100 Pisa - Italy

establish a forum that facilitates and potentiates dialogue with other similar organisations inside and outside Europe. The foundation of a European multidisciplinary umbrella organisation with representation from well-established professional bodies and their specialist organs dealing with addictions as well as addictions scientific societies is needed to lobby for resources and exchange information that would maximise the efforts to tackle the problem. The proposed European College of Addictions Sciences would fulfil such a function without replicating the work of existing structures and organisations. It can help establish a proper framework to foster multi-centre research.

We invite all concerned scientists, working in the different areas related to Addictive Disorders to follow this discussion at the First European Congress on Addictive Disorders, 27th-29th March 2003 in Alicante (Spain).

**The College's aims would include:**

A. Improving contribution of research:

- To provide a forum that would facilitate the communication of new advances in basic, naturalistic, clinical, and epidemiological research.
- To promote an evidence-based approach to interventions by:
  - Identifying and summarizing existing evidence.
  - Disseminating the evidence.
  - Facilitating the transfer of evidence into practice.
  - Facilitating multicentre experimental research.
- To promote research into cost effectiveness of interventions.
- To encourage research into the identification of factors which may affect effectiveness of interventions and thus help to improve quality of interventions.
- To establish a network of experts that could explore fund-raising opportunities across Europe to support common initiatives and multidisciplinary cross-national research.

B. Improvement of treatment services for addictive disorders in Europe:

- Whether in primary or specialised care, the scientific evidence base for the treatment approaches used is not always sufficient. New channels to dissemination of research findings into policy, services planning and practice will be promoted.
- More research will be promoted to provide options for services, in order to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous population of substance misusers with psychiatric and somatic illnesses.
- To encourage research to provide treatment services and programmes with adequate evaluation systems, of processes and results, that would allow determining the effectiveness and efficacy of the implemented interventions.
- Ethical issues to be addressed include: patients' choices; the accessibility and availability of suitably diversified services; aspects of mandatory and coercive treatments; the need to appreciate ethical issues in future research.

All the participants who met in Santiago de Compostela for the I European

Symposium on Clinic Problems of Addictive Disorders wish to express their gratitude to the Plan de Galicia sobre Drogas of the Conselleria de Sanidad of the Galician Government, to the Plan Nacional sobre Drogas of the Ministerio de Interior of the Spanish Government, and to the Sociedad Española de Toxicomanías (Spanish Society on Drug Addiction) for supporting and encouraging this discussion.

#### Authors

Francisco Javier Álvarez (Spain)  
Manuel Araujo (Spain)  
Marc Auriacombe (France)  
Joe Barry (Ireland)  
Elisardo Becoña (Spain)  
Indalecio Carrera (Spain)  
Miguel Casas (Spain)  
Miguel Castellano (Spain)  
Manuel Castro (Spain)  
Janis Caunitis (Latvia)  
Gaspar Cervera (Spain)  
Jonathan Chick (United Kingdom)  
Marina Davoli (Cochrane Drugs and Alcohol Review Group)  
Almudena de Silva (Spain)  
Marica Ferri (Cochrane Drugs and Alcohol Review Group)  
Esther García-Usieto (Spain)  
José Guardia (Spain)  
Gonzalo Haro (Spain)  
Karl Mann (Germany)  
Icro Maremmani (Italy and EUROPAD)  
Fernando Márquez (Spain)  
Emiliano Martín (Spain)  
José Martínez-Raga (Spain)  
Margareta Nilson (EMCDDA and Sweden)  
César Pascual (Spain)  
Bartolomé Pérez (Spain)  
José Carlos Pérez de los Cobos (Spain)  
Vladimir Poznyak (Belarus WHO)  
Gabriel Rubio (Spain)  
Ulf Rydberg (Sweden)  
Joaquín Santodomingo (Spain)  
Christian Schütz (Germany)  
Astrida Stirna (Latvia)  
John Strang (United Kingdom)

Marta Torrens (Spain)  
Juan Carlos Valderrama (Spain)  
Shamil Wanigaratne (United Kingdom)

*Received July, 20, 2002*