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Third course: The Public Health Approach in Drugs Policies

DESCRIPTION: This course focuses on strengthening the competencies of the National Agencies responsible for drug policies to facilitate the adoption of the Public Health approach. Policies whose formulation takes into account criteria of evidence and efficiency, timely technical evaluation, criteria of equity, respect for the health and human rights, community participation and a gender vision.

ADDRESSED TO: Professionals from the public sector responsible for the National Drug Agencies, drug policy planners and responsible for the elaboration of these Drug Policies.

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the course, the participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of the Public Health perspective in drug policies to ensure a comprehensive approach to the problematic use of psychoactive substances.
- Understand the role that scientific evidence plays in making decisions about drug policies and how it is connected with the Public Health approach.
- Know and identify the main aspects of designing and evaluating public policies focused on the solution of public problems.
- Know the normative frameworks, strategies and action criteria on health promoting and preventive policies at individual and collective level.
- Know the effectiveness, efficiency, equity and sustainability indicators for Public Health policies.
- Acknowledge current development on treatments for persons with problematic drug use, as well as the process of evaluation and monitoring of programs, networks and treatment systems, with a quality based management perspective.
- Know the necessary steps for data collection and statistical analysis applied to Public Health and the use of psychoactive substances, as well as study design process and data collection tools.

- Know the basic concepts of Network Theory and analysis of social networks, used in programme planning to address drug abuse derived problems, implement group prevention strategies and guide the processes of reintegration of individuals who have been under treatment.
- Understand the Human Rights approach and its usefulness to make further progress on health equity, especially considering social determinants when implementing policies and actions aimed at people who use psychoactive substances.
- Know how to analyze and explain, on the bases of most updated research, relevant aspects, concepts, trends and consequences of the international legal framework on global drug control policies, particularly in relation to substance use and Public Health.
- Become aware of the importance of reaching the necessary consensus to design, implement and evaluate Public Health policies and programs, as well as tools to analyze the normative, cultural, political and legal dimensions involved in the approach to drug use as Public Health issue.
- Strengthen the importance of supporting Public Health, develop its objectives in relation to drugs issues and promote advocacy skills in the community as means to uphold and improve public policies, regulatory changes and the allocation of resources.
- Know the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) driving social participation, defining, formulating and evaluating drug policies.

CONTENTS:

	Topic	Content	Author
1	Drugs Policies and Public Health: A comprehensive approach	Beyond the “supply reduction and demand reduction” dichotomy, deepening into the implications of the Public Health perspective in the approach to the use of psychoactive substances and its consequences. Importance of the bio-medical, psycho-social and socio-cultural approaches in the design of drugs policies.	María Elena Medina Mora, PhD
2	Evidence as base for decision-making	The role and importance of the Inter-American Drugs Observatory and of the national observatories in the generation, processing and analysis of the scientific evidence. Tools for the analysis of key indicators related to drug use (access and availability for use, socio-sanitary impact of use and other relevant indicators), the impact on others (traffic accidents, work accidents, domestic and gender violence, among others) and other social problems (such as human trafficking and social vulnerability), as well as other ones relevant to the definition of the problem and programs to address it). Tools and methods for the analysis of the formulation, implementation and evaluation processes of public drugs policies.	Francisco Cumsille, PhD Marya Hynes, MPH

3	Analysis of efficacy, efficiency, equity and sustainability of public policies in health	The health system. Indicators of efficacy and efficiency. Good practices promoting equity in care in the health sector. Generation of financial and institutional strengths to achieve the sustainability of health policies and programs to address drug users. Project management and process management in Public Health. Cost-effectiveness analysis. Optimization of the health system and of its human and material resources.	Marino González, PhD
4	The state of the art in the field of health promotion and prevention of drug use	Information, education and empowerment of people and communities in relation to drugs. Normative frameworks and development of policies promoting individual and collective health.	Juan Carlos Mansilla, MSc
5	The state of the art in the field of successful interventions in the treatment of different types and different levels of drug use, and social reintegration of the people assisted	Evaluation of the efficacy, accessibility and quality of the services: What Works and what does not work? What success to expect? Intentional, legal, financial, and organizational requirements to guarantee its quality, adequacy and efficient use. Provision of public care services.	Gabriel Rossi, MD Luis Gonzáles, MSc
6	Diagnosis and research of drug-related problems: (1) Quantitative methods	Collection and analysis of statistical data applied to Public Health and the use of psychoactive substances. Primary and secondary sources. Validity and reliability of measures. The meaning and importance of periodical sample and census-based studies. Introduction to descriptive analysis and statistical inference. Correlation, regression and causality. How to create and interpret a report with statistical data.	Novie Younguer-Coleman, PhD
7	Diagnosis and research of drug-related problems: (2) Qualitative techniques	Collection and analysis of qualitative information for the formulation, permanent monitoring and evaluation of health policies on the use of psychoactive substances. Documentary analysis, deep interviews, ethnographic interviews, social network analysis and use of information technologies to promote drugs policies and programs.	Iria Puyosa, PhD
8	Equity, Human Rights and Drug-Related Health Policy	The promotion and protection of all the rights for all drug users. Current challenges in inclusion and diversity of drugs policies. The importance of the gender perspective in drugs policies. The specific protection of the right to health as a fundamental right of the whole population, independently of their relationship with drugs. Drug use and health problems of populations with specific needs and/or in high-risk situations: people in deprivation of liberty, sex workers, minors, senior adults and people in street situation.	Demalú Amighetti López, MSc Eugenia Mata, MSc

9	Legal framework of drugs policies and Public Health	Comparative studies and current trends. Differences and relations between the concepts of prohibition, criminalization, penalization, decriminalization, legalization, and de-regulation of substance use. Their effects on the right to health of people using drugs and the general population.	Christian Espinoza, PhD
10	Analysis of the social pertinence and political and legal viability of Drug-Related Health Policies	The necessary consensuses for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of Public Health and drugs policies and programs. Analysis of the normative, cultural, political and legal, dimensions of the approach to drug use as a Public Health program. Stakeholder identification techniques. Social and State stakeholders. International, national and local stakeholders. When a stakeholder becomes an interested part. Determination of influences and relative power of the interested parts. Negotiation and agreement techniques. Mechanisms of conflict management and generation of consensuses.	Ángel E. Álvarez, PhD
11	Strategies for advocacy in Public Health and drugs	Importance and defense of Public Health –with emphasis on mass media- in the advancement of the objectives of Public Health in relation to drugs and promotion of advocacy skills in the community as a way of supporting the progress of public policies, normative changes and resource-allocation. Theory and practice of the elaboration of discourses and news in social networks and mass media.	Gloria Perdomo, PhD
12	Synthesis: Current state of the formulation of drug-related Public Health policies	Different trends in the region. Towards the search for consensuses and flexibility in the formulation of drug use-specific policies, focused on health and human rights.	Luis Alfonzo, PhD
13	The role of civil society	The role of non-governmental organizations (NGO) is to drive the social involvement in the definition, formulation and evaluation of drugs policies. Consensuses and dissensions among NGOs regarding the social aspect of drugs and how to address it. Balance of the regional incidence of NGOs in drugs policies. Role of NGOs in the prevention, treatment, social reintegration and defense of human rights of the users of psychoactive substances. Recommendations on good practices of NGOs focused on the drug problem.	Josep Rovira, MSc Silverio Espinal, MSc Margarita Sánchez, MSc