



alcohol & drugs

Report on the meeting on indicators
for monitoring alcohol, drugs and other
psychoactive substance use, substance-
attributable harm and societal responses

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WHO would like to express its gratitude to the experts from national institutions and international organizations who participated in the meeting on indicators for monitoring alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substance use, substance-attributable harm and societal responses in Valencia, Spain in October 2009. Their knowledge and expertise were invaluable in driving the discussions forward. The list of invited experts engaged in this process is provided at the end of this report.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Information on the consumption of alcohol and drugs, related harms and associated treatment and policy responses are lacking from many parts of the world, as many surveillance and monitoring systems do not include indicators on psychoactive substance use. The ongoing systematic collection, collation, and analysis of data would lead to the accumulation of substantial information on a country's disease burden, the number of people at risk, and whether effective policy and treatment measures are being effectively implemented. Monitoring or the process of continuous data collection requires the use of standardized and comparable indicators to reliably and comparably capture change and to establish trends. Monitoring of alcohol and other psychoactive substance use is greatly needed as it generates valuable data to provide health professionals and policy makers at the national level with the information required to drive program development, policy and legislation.

At the regional and global level there is also a growing demand for effective systems to monitor trends on psychoactive substance use, substance-attributable harm and societal responses. Regional and global frameworks for reducing alcohol and drug-related harm require comparable data on key indicators to evaluate progress made at the regional and global level, and are also essential to perform meaningful within-country and cross-country comparisons. Comparable and reliable data on levels and patterns of alcohol and drug use in populations, prevalence of substance use disorders and magnitude of other health consequences are also necessary for improving estimates of alcohol and drug-attributable burden at regional and global levels.

Several regional and global organizations, including those at the UN system, as well as some national institutions and organizations and research groups have accumulated substantial experience in developing different sets of indicators and therewith associated data collection and analysis procedures, which could be also recommended for implementation at the sub-national and national level. The World Health Organization

(WHO) has a constitutional mandate within the UN system to monitor the health situation and to assess health trends, including those related to alcohol and other psychoactive substance use. This work is being implemented in collaboration and in partnership with relevant UN agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and national authorities.

In this context, the WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Management of Substance Abuse convened a technical meeting on indicators for monitoring alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substance use, substance-attributable harm and societal responses from 19-21 October 2009 in Valencia, Spain, with the support of the Government of Valencia.

Objective and purpose

The purpose of the technical meeting in Valencia was to discuss a relevant set of indicators to effectively assess and monitor alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substances regarding consumption, harm, treatment and policy responses respectively.

As agreed by the participants of the technical meeting, objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- To present and discuss a suggested set of core, expanded and additional indicators for monitoring alcohol consumption and drug use in populations;
- To present and discuss a suggested set of core, expanded and additional indicators for monitoring alcohol- and drug-attributable harm;
- To present and discuss a suggested set of core, expanded and additional indicators for monitoring responses at the level of treatment and treatment systems;
- To present and discuss a suggested set of core, expanded and additional indicators for monitoring societal responses for alcohol and drug use at the population level.

Guiding principles

Consensus among the meeting participants about the selection of core, expanded and additional indicators on monitoring consumption, harm, and societal responses of psychoactive substance use have been driven by the following guiding principles.

- All indicators on alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substance use as presented in this meeting report have to be mainly related to the health or wellbeing of the individual or populations.
- Indicators have to be consistent with current recognized international data collection practices and standards, and take into consideration WHO activities in this area such as the WHO Global Survey on Alcohol and Health, the ATLAS Survey on Resources for the Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders, the WHO Global Information System on Alcohol and Health, and other WHO activities such as the development of the WHO Global Health Observatory.
- The burden on countries in collecting and compiling data shall be minimized by harmonizing indicators on psychoactive substance use with data collected by other specialized international agencies (e.g. EMCDDA, UNAIDS, UNODC) in that area.
- Guidance for indicator operationalization or possible data sources will be provided, but additional effort is required at the national level to adjust and refine indicators according to national needs, resources and data collection

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