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***International  
guidelines***  
*for the evaluation of  
treatment services and  
systems for psychoactive  
substance use disorders*

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# International guidelines for the evaluation of treatment services and systems for psychoactive substance use disorders

**John Marsden**

Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, United Kingdom

**Alan Ogborne**

Alan Ogborne and Associates, London, Ontario, Canada

**Michael Farrell**

Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, United Kingdom

**Brian Rush**

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Ontario



WHO  
World Health  
Organization



UNDCP  
United Nations  
International Drug  
Control Programme



EMCDDA  
European Monitoring  
Centre for Drugs  
and Drug Addiction

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**Maria Lucia O. Souza Formigoni, Ph.D.**

University of Sao Paulo  
Escola Paulista de Medicina, Brazil

**Professor Christine Godfrey**

University of York,  
United Kingdom

**Professor Wayne Hall**

Executive Director  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales, Australia

**Jennifer Hillebrand**

Management of Substance Dependence  
Department of Mental Health and Substance  
Dependence  
World Health Organization

**Dr Alexander Kantchev**

National Center for Addiction  
Sofia, Bulgaria

**Petra Paula Merino**

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug  
Addiction (EMCDDA)

**Dr Maristela Monteiro**

Management of Substance Dependence  
Department of Mental Health and Substance  
Dependence  
World Health Organization

**Margareta Nilson**

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug  
Addiction (EMCDDA)

**Ms Christina Gynna Oguz**

Chief, Demand Reduction Section,  
United Nations International Drug Control  
Programme (UNDCP)

**Dr Charles Parry**

Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
National Urbanisation & Health Research  
Programme  
Medical Research Council, South Africa

**Dr Vichai Poshyachinda**

Chief of Drug Dependence Research Center  
Institute of Health Research  
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

**Dr Vladimir Poznyak**

Management of Substance Dependence  
Department of Mental Health and Substance  
Dependence  
World Health Organization

**Dr Edle Ranvndal**

National Institute for Alcohol & Drug Research,  
Norway

**Dr Margret Rihs-Middel**

Federal Office of Public Health  
Main Unit Dependency and Aids  
Section Policy and Research, Switzerland

**Dr Juana Tomás Rosselló**

Drug Abuse Treatment Adviser,  
Demand Reduction Section  
United Nations International Drug Control  
Programme (UNDCP)

**Dr Maree Teesson**

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales, Australia

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directorship of Dr Mary Jansen, former WHO  
Substance Abuse Department.

# Foreword to the WHO/UNDCP/EMCDDA guidelines for treatment evaluation

This publication is the result of an exemplary collaboration between the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Abuse (EMCDDA). Already in 1996 UNDCP and WHO initiated joint work towards the development of tools for programme managers to carry out evaluation of their existing treatment approaches and to help them decide on the allocation of resources and access to effective treatment to their patients. A series of workbooks on evaluation of treatment were prepared and field tested in several countries, and should be seen as complimentary to the present guidelines, for training and planning purposes.

The association of the EMCDDA with this project started in 1997 in Athens with a seminar organised jointly by the EMCDDA, the Greek National Focal Point and WHO. The seminar aimed at reaching consensus among key European scientists, networks and policy makers in the area of drug abuse treatment evaluation and the role of the EMCDDA in this field. Since then, the EMCDDA became a partner of WHO and UNDCP in this project, and will now contribute to the diffusion of the guidelines and the associated workbooks across the EU.

Since the inception of the project, further international developments have occurred and need mention. The Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and the Action Plan for its implementation adopted by United Nations Member States in 1998 and 1999 respectively, highlight the importance and need for evidence-based practices as well as of learning from experiences. These are key pillars for the development and implementation of enhanced drug demand reduction strategies and programmes, a target to be reached by Member States by 2003 in accordance with the 1998 UN General Assembly Political Declaration on the Drug Problem. The UNDCP is committed to providing guidance and assistance to Member States in reaching this target, and views these guidelines for treatment evaluation and the workbook series as key instruments to encourage the assessment of the effectiveness of drug abuse treatment strategies and activities, and the exchange of evaluation results.

The Helsinki European Summit endorsed the EU Drug Strategy 2000-2004 in December 1999. The Strategy provides a framework for all drug-related activities in the EU over the next five years. The European Union

Action Plan on Drugs (2000-2004) set out an agreed programme for the implementation of the principles and targets set in the Strategy. The Action Plan states that The European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction will establish guidelines for the evaluation of drug policies in Europe.

The World Health Organisation decided to make 2001 the year for Mental Health. One of the major objectives of the coming World Health Assembly 2001, World Health Day 2001, and the World Health Report in 2001 will be the control of mental health problems. The promotion of this objective through the WHO will also include recommendations for effective service delivery in the field of substance dependence. The present guidelines will serve as one step towards improved treatment for psychoactive substance disorders internationally.

In the past, evaluation of treatment services has not been recognised as a means to enhance the efficacy of existing services. However, due to recent developments in health and social care systems, and budget constraints, the need for more systematic evaluations has increased. Evaluations not only help to justify financial support for treatment services; they are also essential to increase and maintain best clinical practice. The success of future evaluations will partly depend on the availability of information on how to implement and plan evaluations. For this reason, practical and comprehensive guidance on evaluation is necessary. This publication is especially addressed to policy makers, programme managers and service providers in the field of drug demand reduction who will find the guidelines a unique source of reference. The guidelines will help decisions to be made about critical aspects, especially at the moment of conceptualising, planning and commissioning the evaluation of treatment services. They should also serve as a valuable reference in designing evaluation and to make optimal use of available resources. In order to improve drug demand reduction policies in the area of assistance to drug abusers, the guidelines are also aimed at disseminating critical, scientifically supported knowledge in this regard.

We would like to thank the authors of the guidelines for providing a compact and succinct overview of different types of evaluation. We would also like to express our thanks to all experts and policy makers who helped to review the guidelines by providing their valuable comments on earlier drafts.

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# Preface

These guidelines describe methods for the evaluation of treatment services and systems for substance use disorders. The guides are intended to be a companion resource to the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) workbook series on the evaluation of costs and effects of treatment for substance use disorders, co-ordinated by Dr. Maristela Monteiro and Dr Brian Rush (WHO, 2000).

The main audience is policy makers, commissioners of treatment services and treatment agency personnel who want to know more about research evaluation and commission or undertake evaluation studies. We hope that there will be much to interest the international research community as well.

The guidelines are intended to be of particular interest for countries where research and evaluation in this area is not widely developed. Our aim is to offer a concise description of the main evaluation methods and to help the reader to select the best type of study to answer specific questions. The goal is to encourage readers to the use of evaluation to help develop and maintain effective and efficient treatment services and treatment systems.

These guidelines are not intended to be a detailed, step-by-step instruction manual on how to do research. The interested reader should obtain the related series of workbooks which cover this in detail (WHO/UNDCP/EMCDDA, 2000). We have referred to particular workbooks in several places for further reading and this document is a natural com-

We have tried to prepare the guidelines using a non-technical language. Nevertheless, some evaluation issues of a more technical nature have been covered in Section 3: Special Issues. Those who wish to read a more general account of evaluation methods and issues should skip this section. Finally, we do encourage those planning an evaluation to obtain expert advice wherever feasible. Getting appropriate advice early on in the planning of an evaluation is very important and can ensure that appropriate resources are identified, that the correct evaluation design is selected, and the data is analysed and correctly presented.

We hope to find the guidelines useful and warmly welcome feedback and suggestions.

Please write to:

World Health Organization (WHO)  
Management of Substance Dependence  
Department of Mental Health  
and Substance Dependence  
Avenue Appia 20  
1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

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