

# Amphetamine-type Stimulants

**A report from the WHO Meeting on Amphetamines,  
MDMA and other Psychostimulants  
Geneva, 12-15 November 1996**



**Programme on Substance Abuse  
Division of Mental Health and Prevention of Substance Abuse  
World Health Organization  
Geneva, 1997**

## **ABSTRACT**

This report on amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) summarizes both: the findings of a World Health Organization Meeting on Amphetamines, MDMA and other Psychostimulants, held at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland from 12 to 15 November 1996; and background papers prepared for that meeting and subsequently revised.

This report presents key issues relating to amphetamine-type stimulants: epidemiology and social context; pharmacology and toxicology; health effects and social consequences; treatment approaches; prevention approaches and policy responses.

The report concludes with recommendations regarding WHO providing assistance in the development of strategic responses to amphetamine-type stimulant use.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Mr* This report has been prepared by Martin C. Donoghoe, Scientist, World Health Organization Programme on Substance Abuse with the collective effort of colleagues in the Programme on Substance Abuse and many other experts from around the world.

In particular, the contribution of the following individuals to the preparation of this report is gratefully acknowledged:

Moruf Adelekan, Edward Adlaf, Alsayed Alkott, Robert Ali, Cornelio Banaag, Pavel Bém, Michael Farrell, Paul Griffiths, Arthur Hughes, Hilary Klee, Ronaldo Laranjeira, Ho Young Lee, Wendy Loxley, Barbara Lysakowska, Bernhard Meili, Thomas Pietschmann, George Ricaurte, Meriel Schultz, David Stanley, Hiroshi Suwaki, Ambros Uchtenhagen, Suphak Vanichseni, Louisa Vingoe, Sara Williamson and Alex Wodak.

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report.

The secretarial support of Magdalena Musngi of the Programme on Substance Abuse is very gratefully acknowledged.

The meeting and the production of this report was made possible due to the generous financial support of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs



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# Introduction

## 1. BACKGROUND

Between 12-15 November 1996 expert participants from fifteen countries, observers from six international organizations and representatives of the Swiss Federal Office of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health met at the Headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss amphetamines, MDMA<sup>a</sup> and other psychostimulants.

The meeting was opened by Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of the World Health Organization. He expressed great concern about the use of amphetamines, MDMA and other psychostimulants as a public health issue. While amphetamine-type stimulants<sup>b</sup> (ATS) have been available and used for many years, in the last ten years their manufacture, trafficking and use have been increasing in many countries. The use of MDMA and other amphetamine analogues is a relatively new international phenomena and it is timely that WHO review the broader issues. In many countries the use of these drugs is widespread. Health risks and other problems associated with amphetamine-type stimulant use are poorly understood. This lack of understanding presents obstacles to prevention, treatment and policy responses.

Reflecting these concerns the World Health Organization's Programme on Substance Abuse (PSA), with the support of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, have set about to review: epidemiology and social context of ATS use; pharmacology; health risks and other consequences of use; prevention; treatment of users; and policy responses to ATS use.

Dr Nakajima reported that following the Geneva meeting it was proposed that a second phase (Phase II) of studies would be developed which: contribute further to an

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