
Director's Letter



DRUG ABUSE

In recent years, the phenomenon of drug use and abuse has grown to such proportions that it has become not only a priority health problem affecting individuals, but also a serious threat to the stability of social, political, and legal institutions in the countries of the Region. Like its ramifications, the problem is multifaceted, and thus can only be tackled through a comprehensive approach that encompasses control of drug production and trafficking as well as addiction prevention, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of the drug addict.

The responsibility of the Pan American Health Organization, as a specialized agency of the United Nations in the field of health, centers on the areas of assessment of the epidemiologic characteristics of the drug epidemic, and prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. PAHO's Governing Bodies have repeatedly expressed their concern about the problem of improper use of drugs and have defined it as a priority. In response to those concerns and as part of its commitment to its Member Countries, PAHO has proposed expanding its collaboration with them in developing drug abuse prevention and control programs. An integral element of this collaboration is support for the compilation, processing, and analysis of epidemiologic information, such as that presented in this special issue, on drug abuse and on treatment and rehabilitation activities. The fight against drug abuse in the Region of the Americas will require that the countries unite with a clear political will and that sufficient resources be mobilized from international agencies and institutions and from the affected countries themselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlyle Guerra de Macedo'.

Carlyle Guerra de Macedo
Pan American Sanitary Bureau