

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMS FOR NURSES TO STUDY THE DRUG PHENOMENON IN LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES¹

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The First International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in the Americas is a result of a partnership between the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Faculty of Nursing in the University of Alberta, with financial support from the Government of Canada. The program was divided into two parts. The first part of the program was held at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It involved capacity-building in research methodologies at the Faculty of Nursing, which lead to the preparation of four multi-centric research proposals for drug demand reduction in the home countries of the eleven participants in the program. The second part of the program was related to the implementation of multi-centric research proposals in seven countries in Latin America and in Canada. This program presented expertise in research methodology to members of Latin American Schools of Nursing and introduced Latin American expertise to members of a Canadian Faculty of Nursing. The International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in the Americas has fostered the kind of inter-cultural respect and mutual appreciation necessary to confront the global health problem of the abuse of both licit and illicit drugs.

DESCRIPTORS: international educational exchange; training; nursing research

PROGRAMAS INTERNACIONALES DE CAPACITACIÓN EN INVESTIGACIÓN PARA ENFERMEROS EN EL ESTUDIO DEL FENÓMENO DE LAS DROGAS EN AMÉRICA LATINA: DESAFÍOS Y PERSPECTIVAS

El Primer Programa Internacional de Capacitación en Investigación para Enfermeros en el Estudio del Fenómeno de las Drogas en las Américas resultó de una colaboración entre la Comisión Interamericana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas (CICAD) de la Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA) y la Facultad de Enfermería en la Universidad de Alberta, con apoyo financiero del Gobierno de Canadá. El programa fue dividido en dos partes. La primera parte del programa se organizó en la Universidad de Alberta en Edmonton, Alberta, Canadá. Abarcó la capacitación en metodologías de investigación en la Facultad de Enfermería, que llevó a la preparación de cuatro propuestas de investigación multicéntrica con vistas a la reducción de la demanda de drogas en los países de origen de los once participantes en el programa. La segunda parte del programa estaba relacionada a la implementación de propuestas de investigación multicéntrica en siete países de América Latina y en Canadá. Este programa presentó conocimientos especializados en metodologías de investigación a miembros de Escuelas de Enfermería latinoamericanas e introdujo los conocimientos especializados latinoamericanos a miembros de una Facultad de Enfermería canadiense. El Programa Internacional de Capacitación en Investigación para Enfermeros en el Estudio del Fenómeno de las Drogas en las Américas estimuló el tipo de respeto intercultural y apreciación mutua necesario para confrontar el problema de salud global del abuso de drogas lícitas e ilícitas.

DESCRIPTORES: intercambio educacional internacional; capacitación; investigación en enfermería

PROGRAMAS INTERNACIONAIS DE CAPACITAÇÃO EM PESQUISA PARA ENFERMEIROS NO ESTUDO DO FENÔMENO DAS DROGAS NA AMÉRICA LATINA: DESAFIOS E PERSPECTIVAS

O Primeiro Programa Internacional de Capacitação para Enfermeiros no Estudo do Fenômeno das Drogas nas Américas é resultado de uma parceria entre a Comissão Interamericana para o Controle do Abuso das Drogas (CICAD) da Organização dos Estados Americanos (OEA) e a Faculdade de Enfermagem da Universidade de Alberta, com apoio financeiro do Governo do Canadá. O programa foi dividido em duas partes. A primeira parte do programa foi realizada na Universidade de Alberta em Edmonton, Alberta, Canadá. Compreendeu a capacitação em metodologias de pesquisa na Faculdade de Enfermagem, que levou à preparação de quatro propostas de pesquisas multicêntricas para a redução da demanda de drogas nos países de origem dos onze participantes no programa. A segunda parte do programa estava relacionada à implementação de propostas de pesquisa multicêntricas em sete países da América Latina e no Canadá. Este programa apresentou expertise em metodologias de pesquisa a membros de Escolas de Enfermagem latino-americanas e introduziu expertise latino-americana a membros de uma Faculdade de Enfermagem canadense. O Primeiro Programa Internacional de Capacitação para Enfermeiros no Estudo do Fenômeno das Drogas nas Américas estimulou o tipo de respeito intercultural e apreço mútuo necessário para confrontar o problema de saúde global do abuso das drogas lícitas e ilícitas.

DESCRIPTORES: intercâmbio educacional internacional; capacitação; pesquisa em enfermagem

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INTRODUCTION

Today, nations around the world are recognizing that in matters of international and global health, it is not enough to be concerned with the health status of their own population. As we continue to evolve into a global community, one nation's public health concern becomes the concern of all nations. We have evidence in the end of the XX Century and in the beginning of XXI Century, that the emergence and consolidation of an economic paradigm, which gives emphasis on domestic deregulation, and removal of barriers to international trade and finance, can have a direct impact on the health status of populations⁽¹⁾.

This new paradigm encompasses the process of globalization, which involves an increased integration of different economies and societies as a result of greater flows of goods, capital, people, and ideas. We have seen trade and foreign asset ownership increased to new highs of world income. International travel is occurring at unprecedented levels, while Internet has facilitated low-cost communications around the globe. This integration has economic benefits as well as concerns for health and the drug phenomenon⁽¹⁻²⁾.

As a consequence of the globalization process, many public health issues have come to be seen as affecting all nations.. Various factors have dictated that the risks affecting nations are no longer restricted to the infectious diseases, and a new range of health threats, such as substance abuse, that go beyond national boundaries have emerged⁽³⁻⁴⁾.

Many of our current and future dominant health problems will be global, or at least multinational or international in nature. Globalization is a key challenge to policy -makers and public health practitioners, and to making the linkages between globalization, health, and the drug phenomenon becomes very complex⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾.

When health is dealt internationally it can be instrumental in creating more understanding among the nations of the world and contributing significantly to human development. It is not only the state of health and health outcomes that concern us, but also whether national and international action has taken into account the major social and cultural determinants of that health.

The challenges in health care in general, and dealing with the problems related to the drug

phenomenon specifically, requires partnerships and new approaches to the education of health and other professionals. Nurses are in a unique position to provide leadership in meeting the health challenges that affect populations around the globe, including health challenges that related to drug issues.

This paper describes the experience of a technical and financial cooperation between the Inter-American Drug Control Commission/CICAD and the University of Alberta-Faculty of Nursing to implement the "*I International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America*", and presents the challenges and perspectives for an initiative such as this one.

JUSTIFICATION

Among the health care professions, only the nursing profession has blended the bio-physiological, psychosocial, and population perspectives to provide the leadership that will be needed in the emerging health care systems particularly in the fight against the use of illegal drugs in all phases of its process. Nurse researchers make unique, independent contributions to the public 's health.

Nursing takes an expanded view of health by emphasizing activities related to health promotion, health prevention, and social integration, as well as, a commitment to caring and comfort. The nursing knowledge base of communications, health/patient education, team building, negotiations, community health, management of interdisciplinary interaction, patient advocacy, and focus on process makes nurses especially effective patient advocates.

Nursing research, for example, frequently focuses on fostering healthy lifestyles and improving health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. Particularly attention has been given to vulnerable groups such as those susceptible to substance abuse. Nursing research studies have demonstrated how nurses can assist individuals and groups in special situation and also how they can respond to health and illness experiences⁽⁷⁻¹⁰⁾.

The new transnational economic order, and the new social and technological advancements have in some ways facilitated the production, commerce, and consumption of licit and illicit drugs in the Americas and in the world. To revert this situation, in 1996, the members countries of Organization of American States/OAS, and Inter-American Drug Control Commission/CICAD, have adopted the "Anti-Drug

Hemispheric Strategy," as a symbol of consensus achieved among all member countries of the region toward control of drugs, and also, as a demonstration of a political determination and commitment to fight against the drug phenomenon in the Americas. This integrated approach has facilitated the design of international and national policies of common interest to reduce the supply and demand to drugs in the Region of the Americas. Some of the main components of the Hemispheric Strategy are to: (i) strengthen the judiciary and law-enforcement systems; (ii) educate professionals and public in general; (iii) create economic alternative approaches to persons involved with production of illegal drugs; (iv) offer treatment and rehabilitation services to persons with addiction problems; (v) develop international and national cooperation; and (vi) create multi-lateral evaluation mechanisms (MEM) to study the situation of drug phenomenon in the Region⁽¹¹⁾.

Today, around the world, national governments are emphasizing much more the importance and development of activities related to demand reduction, with special attention to the preparation of human resources to work in the area of demand reduction. Taking into consideration this recommendation, in 1997, with the support of the Government of Japan and latter the Governments of the United States and Canada, CICAD initiated an experimental project with some schools of nursing in Latin America. The objectives were to prepare future nursing professionals and nursing professionals with scientific knowledge and technical abilities to work in the area of demand reduction with activities related to health promotion, prevention of drug use and abuse, and social integration⁽¹²⁾.

The CICAD/OAS initiative with schools of nursing recognizes the importance an international organization and the Governments of Japan, the United States, Canada, and Latin America countries place on the nursing profession in relation to the drug phenomenon in Latin America, with special attention in the area of demand reduction. The nursing profession constitutes the largest segment of the health care work force, and they are the professionals, who maintain the most contact with individuals, families and communities, therefore, they are able to identify the precocity of problems related to drugs licit and illicit.

Investment in the development of nursing professionals to work in the area of demand reduction in Latin America requires the design of international and national policies that will support such initiatives.

As well, the development of new models of partnerships to carry out the activities are required.

TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL COOPERATION

CICAD uses the technical and financial cooperation (TFC) approach to develop new models of partnerships with universities and schools of nursing in the Americas to prepare nursing faculty and future nursing professional to work in the area of demand reduction. Since 1997, CICAD has developed several technical and financial cooperation with the support of Governments of Japan, the United States and Canada. Up today, CICAD has developed TFC with sixteen universities and schools of nursing/SON distributed in ten countries of Latin America: Argentina (2 SON); Brazil (4/SON); Bolivia (1/Son); Chile (1/SON); Colombia (1/SON); Ecuador (1/SON); Honduras (1/SON); Mexico (3/SON); Peru (1/SON); and Venezuela (1/SON) to implement activities related to: (i) *education*: development of nursing curricula with content of drugs; (ii) *extension*: implementation of outreach community activities with drug content for special groups and high risk population; and (iii) *research*: implementation of research studies on drug issues and related problems.

During 2002 and 2003, CICAD developed a special TFC with the University of São Paulo, School of Nursing at Ribeirão Preto/SP/Brazil to implement the "Regional Research Capacity-Building Programs for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America" with the support of Government of Japan. A total of thirty three (33) nursing faculty have been trained in two years. The first group, a total of eighteen (18) faculty, has completed their research, graduated and published the first scientific article about the results of their studies related to drugs issues. The second group, a total of fifteen (15) faculty, have already graduated in 2004, and are in process to publish the first scientific article related to the results of their research studies. Based in these two successful experiences, CICAD has developed another special TFC with the University of Alberta-Faculty of Nursing, to implement the "International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America".

The difference between the Regional and International Research Capacity-Building Programs is related to the modality of research study. The Regional Program gives emphasis to individual research proposals and the International Program

gives emphasis on multi-centric research studies. Both programs (Regional and International) provide training on qualitative and quantitative research methods applied to the study of the drug phenomenon from an international health perspective. The Regional and the International programs offer a specialization certificate for the participants who have a Master Degree, and a post-doctoral certificate for those who have a doctoral degree. The Regional and International Programs have a duration of one year, with two months at the University São Paulo (Regional Program) and University of Alberta (International Program), and eight months within their own university/country to implement the research study on drug issue.

CICAD, in 2002, invited the University of Alberta, Faculty of Nursing to be a partner to implement the *"I International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America"*, with the support of Government of Canada. The objectives of the program include: (i) to prepare a group of nursing faculty to do multi-centric research studies on drug issues; (ii) to strength the graduate nursing programs in Latin America; (iii) to create research groups within their own Universities and Schools of Nursing that will support research on drug phenomenon; (iv) to facilitated exchange of faculty and graduate students among the participating Universities and Schools of Nursing; and (v) to promote the increase of nursing scientific knowledge in the demand reduction area in Latin America with publications at international and national levels.

The Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta is the largest nursing faculty in Canada with over 1,000 undergraduate and 250 graduate students. It strives to fulfill its mission to be a center of excellence in nursing for the advancement, dissemination, and application of nursing knowledge. The faculty members are among the best educated in Canada with a greater percentage having doctoral degrees than any other nursing school in the country.

The University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing is dedicated to the improvement of the health of the local and global community, through its leadership teaching, research, and community service. Incorporate in its mission is an intent to extend the Faculty's expertise to the community locally, nationally, and internationally, in order to foster health promotion, health maintenance, and the advancement of the nursing profession. Its faculty members focus their research programs in five areas of research excellence: Global Health, Health Systems and

Services, Evidence Based Clinical Practice, Innovative Learning Environments and Population Health. There is a particular emphasis on knowledge transfer to develop competence in nursing practice, still a quest for knowledge, and create a sense of professionalism thus enabling nurses to utilize cutting edge nursing research to provide evidence-based care. The Annual Report for 2002 – 2003 clearly indicates a strategic initiative focusing on developing international partnerships. During that year, there were 8 international research projects and 30 faculty members presenting at international conferences.

ACADEMIC STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

CICAD and the University of Alberta-Faculty of Nursing selected eleven nursing faculty from seven countries, Argentina (1); Brazil (5); Chile (1); Colombia (1);Ecuador (1); Mexico (1); and Peru (1) to participate in the *"I International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in Latin America"*, held at Edmonton, Canada. The program had a total of 810 hours, divided into Part I: 310 hours for on-site, Faculty of Nursing, Part II: 500 hours for follow-up mentoring distance-learning techniques, where the participants went back to their countries to implement the research studies; and Part III: communication and dissemination of the results of research studies, where the participants presented their results at international and national conferences within their countries as well as outside of their countries. The faculty involved included: a total of 5 from the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing; a total of 4 National Consultants; and one representative from CICAD, who was responsible for Module I of the program. The language spoken in the Program was English. The Program had two coordinators: one international coordinator representing CICAD/OAS; and one local coordinator, representing the Faculty of Nursing.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Part I of the Program was composed of three Modules, which emphasized the following aspects: (i) Module I – International Health and the Drug Phenomenon; (ii) Module II – The Drug Phenomenon; and Module III – Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Methods. Part II – of the Program was composed of Mentoring Distance-Research Techniques. Each student received a Laptop computer and accompanying software to conduct data analysis needed to implement her research project. Faculty members from Latin American University Schools of Nursing were welcomed to the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta as Scholars in Residence. In order to facilitate the work of the Latin American faculty, English as a second language (ESL) training was provided. Two weeks of intensive training was offered from 8:00-12:00 and 14:00-17:00 Monday to Friday. The training was designed to assist participants to further develop their research skills and to enhance their capacity for participation in international research.

The University of Alberta has several libraries and an extensive collection of health-related books and journals. Borrowing privileges at all of the libraries and access to the computer-based catalogue and databases was granted to the Latin American Scholars in Residence. The members of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta have expertise in a number of areas that are both directly and indirectly related to the drug phenomenon in the Americas. There was excellent opportunity for collaboration between faculty and Scholars in Residence for the development of multi-centric research studies in drug demand reduction.

Several members of the Faculty of Nursing collaborated with groups of three or four of the Scholars in Residence in preparing proposals for the multi-centric research projects. Four projects emerged from that collaboration: 1) Drug Consumption and Workplace Violence in Women Workers: A Multi-Centric Study in Latin America. Mexico - Peru - Brazil, 2003 -2004; 2) Health Promotion and Quality of Life Among Mothers of Preadolescents in Argentina, Brazil and Chile: A Focused Ethnography Proposal; 3) Perceptions of the Mothering Role for Women Living in the Context of Drugs and Violence; and 4) The Relationship between Drug Use and Violent Behavior in Two Universities in Brazil and Ecuador. All projects were approved by the Health Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta and the appropriate ethics review boards in their home countries.

At the conclusion of the in-country portion of the Program, the Canadian faculty have been available for consultation through distance communication technologies such as email, internet meetings, teleconferencing, telephone, and fax.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The First International Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in the Americas was evaluated through a series of questionnaires and in a focus group with the Director of the Centre for International Nursing at the University of Alberta. The overall program was evaluated by both participants and faculty members who were involved in it. Participants also completed evaluations at the end of each module.

In evaluating the overall program, participants most enjoyed the educational program provided by the Faculty of Nursing and felt that their research skills in quantitative and qualitative methods were markedly strengthened. Participants appreciated the resources available at the libraries of the University of Alberta. The international interchange with other professional nurse academics working in the area of drug demand reduction was strongly cited as a positive and productive aspect of the program.

Participants would have liked some “down time” at the beginning of the program to adapt to Edmonton, Canada and the University of Alberta before beginning full-day coursework. They would also have liked to spend more time on less material.

In evaluating the overall program, Canadian faculty appreciated the opportunity for international collaboration and for hearing and sharing ideas on research in common areas of interest. The chart below provides an overview of the barriers and strengths of the program as indicated by both Canadian and Latin American faculty:

Strengths	Barriers
Opportunity for international dialogue and collaboration	inconsistent ability in language of reading and instruction
opportunity for exchange of research ideas for drug demand reduction	inconsistent health plans
research capacity-building in both quantitative and qualitative method	immediate entry into heavy reading and assignment demands in foreign language and foreign environment
designing methodologically solid multi-centric research projects	
implementation of multi-centric research projects	
enthusiasm, good humor, and hard work of all involved	

IMPACTS PRODUCED

The opportunity to have professionals from seven Latin American countries involved in the project, interacting daily with each other and their Canadian hosts, created rich intercultural and professional growth experiences. The program created opportunities to establish professional partnerships

among the Latin American faculties of nursing as well as with the University of Alberta, Faculty of Nursing. At least one of the proposals developed by the groups received further funding to be conducted in Canada as well as in the Latin American countries. Already, there have been opportunities for faculty members from the Latin American countries and those in Canada to present preliminary research findings at international conferences.

Many bridges were built and much global good will was generated. Many of the participants who hold masters degrees expressed interest in pursuing nursing doctoral education at the University of Alberta. The program fostered a global health perspective on the drug phenomenon in the nurses who participated in the program. Each participant will take this expanded perspective with her as she continues her professional work and this will without doubt enhance international efforts to reduce the demand for drugs. All eleven participants have already graduated from the program and are in process to prepare their first scientific article to be submitted for publication. Indicating in this way the success of the program.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in the Americas offered at the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta as part of the CICAD Schools of Nursing project presented a rich learning experience for all involved. This first experience in developing partnerships between Canadian and Latin American faculty members to design and implement research in the area of drug demand reduction opens the door for other opportunities and challenges. It would be helpful in future, that international capacity-building programs requires a more advanced level of English, a

mandatory health plan that is consistent for each participant, and a week of adjustment time after arriving in the host country before beginning the program. A future consideration might be cost-effective virtual education for research capacity-building.

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Many people contribute behind the scenes to produce a program such as The First International Research Capacity-Building Program for Nurses to Study the Drug Phenomenon in the Americas. These include university support personnel, graduate students, and many people from the international offices at the University of Alberta. Several people contributed quite above the call of duty: A sincere thank you is extended to the staff at St. Joseph's College and to Julie Gilbert for all of the time and attention they devoted to assisting the Latin American faculty with many details of adjusting to life in Edmonton, Canada. We also wish to extend a special thank you to members of the Faculty of Nursing who assisted with hosting our Latin American colleagues.

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