

**CNPq: EDITAL N ° 15/2008**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**PARTIAL RESULTS REPORT**

**YEAR 2009**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR  
POLICIES ON ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**

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**ON ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**  
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**1. Management Committee – meetings and decisions**

During the first year of the National Institute of Science and Technology for Policies on Alcohol and Other Drugs (INPAD), formal meetings of the management committee were conducted weekly. Discussions at these meetings focused on the methodology to be applied in the projects, the scientific literature regarding the topic, and the logistical and operational aspects necessary for the smooth progression of the projects.

After intensive discussions in which the national political and social scene, as well as the scientific and chronological issues related to previous similar projects conducted by the INPAD, were considered, a schedule was developed for the studies that will take place in the year 2010.

The study, "Health Economics: the Cost of Drinking and Driving," is being conducted in the first half of 2010 and a study comparing mortality in alcohol-dependent patients versus the general population will be conducted in the second half of 2010. The "Second survey on patterns of alcohol consumption in the Brazilian population" is scheduled to be conducted in early 2011.

Strategies for disclosing the results of studies already completed, to both the scientific community and the general public, were also decided upon.

The level of information regarding the best policies on the use of alcohol and other drugs is very low. This lack of information affects the legislators. It is known that some interventions, mostly at the municipal level, can have great impact in this area. Aiming to expand access to such information, the INPAD, by decision of its management council, plans to conduct a course on public policy throughout the year of 2010 directed at an audience that could potentially influence the implementation of these policies.

In addition to policies on alcohol and other drugs, the support of the production and the dissemination of scientific knowledge on the best clinical practices in this area, by training of local leaders throughout the Brazilian territory, have become extremely important. The continental dimensions of our country create significant regional differences that need to be respected.

Another project the INPAD plans to implement over the years of 2011/2012 aims precisely at stimulating the training of these local leaders. This project is about the creation of a Master's degree program in chemical dependency. By taking advantage of the teaching experience gained over the past 16 years, both in specialized face-to-face lectures and, more recently, in online courses, we intend to use the electronic resources of the Internet to broaden the scope of our project in the entire Brazilian territory.

Special emphasis was given to the organization and structuring of both human resources and infrastructure for the research activities that will take place in the beginning of the year 2012. These activities are very complex, requiring careful planning and adequate labor training.

## **2. Cooperative activities among the groups of participants of the NIST – National Institute of Science and Technology**

Cooperation, information exchange, and planning among the groups of participants of the National Institute of Science and Technology for Policies on Alcohol and Other Drugs were mainly conducted by electronic media, particularly the Internet, although some face-to-face meetings were also conducted.

However, in the coming months, when some projects in collaboration with other participating groups will leave the planning phase and reach the implementation phase, such face-to-face meetings will be needed more frequently. The possibility of using teleconferencing for the optimization of time and financial resources is currently under investigation.

## **3. Cooperative activities between NIST and other institutions (companies, NGOs, governmental institutions, etc.)**

Some cooperative agreements could be made during the last year, such as those between the Municipal Council of Public Policy on Drugs and Alcohol of the City of São Paulo (COMUDA) and Amor Exigente (Demanding Love), an organization supporting families of drug addicts with groups spread throughout the entire Brazilian territory. These agreements resulted in two important INPAD studies, the results of which will soon be reported to both the general press and the academic community.

## **4. Main technical and scientific results**

#### 4.1. “Drinking and Driving”

This research was conducted in São Paulo between April and May of 2009 with the goal of collecting data regarding the behavior and frequency of drinking and driving in five points of the city: Vila Madalena, Itaim Bibi, Interlagos, Santana, and Tatuapé. These data, obtained after the adoption of new legislation on the subject, will allow comparison with data previously obtained by the INPAD in a study using similar methodology for assessing the impact of this law.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and had a pedagogical approach, with an anonymous questionnaire inquiring as to general data about the driver, his/her attitude towards alcohol, and the degree of knowledge about the law. A breathalyzer test was also conducted on some participants who granted permission for it.

We interviewed 2,077 people, and 357 of them refused to have their alcohol level measured. This is a low enough refusal rate as to not introduce bias into the study. However, compared to the refusal rate found in 2007 (299 out of 2,200 people) there was a significant increase in the refusal rate, which may be understood as evidence of knowledge and fear of the new legislation, the “Lei Seca” (Dry Law).

The respondents were predominantly male (81%). More than half of the respondents have completed college or were currently attending college, showing that the level of education was not a limiting factor in the search for information on this issue.

Fifty percent of the subjects elected beer as the most often consumed beverage. The vast majority of respondents either did not know or declared wrong values for the blood alcohol levels that are considered too high for an individual to drive legally. Still, these same respondents were aware of the penalties that drivers would be charged with if caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

The comparative analysis of the results showed that the percentage of people with a blood alcohol level of zero increased by 6.4%. Overall, in 2009, there was a 32% reduction in the percentage of drivers driving with blood alcohol concentration levels above the legal limits. This reduction appears to reflect the impact of the "Dry Law" on the behavior of drivers in Sao Paulo.

A similar research study is being conducted in the region of Belo Horizonte by another group of collaborators of the NIST for Policies on Alcohol and Drugs.

4.2. The research called "Demanding Love: an assessment of drug addicted individuals by the perspective of their families," points out the following data:

Women seek more aid than men for their relatives (mostly sons and husbands) that are chemically dependent (61% of the families served). Most often, these women are the financial support of the family.

The distribution of age among users is primarily between 16 and 33, with a concentration in the 25 to 29 age group..

Sixty-four percent of users have between 5 and 20 years of drug use, and a large concentration of users have been using drugs for a period of 10 years.

In 68% of cases a relative found out about the drug use by noticing signs of addiction and behavioral changes.

The most often consumed drugs are

Marijuana: 67% and/or

Cocaine: 63% and/or

Alcohol: 47% and/or

Crack: 38%

The drugs reported as being those of preference are

Marijuana: 29%

Cocaine: 27%

Crack: 20%

Alcohol: 18%

According to the family member interviewed, of the factors that contributed to the drug use, the most important are low self-esteem, an individual factor that was mentioned by 36%, and those factors linked to environmental pressure, such as “bad peer influence”, which was reported by 30% of the respondents.

Twenty-four percent of the families are aware of the presence of a psychiatric disorder associated with the addiction of the patient. Common psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder were frequently mentioned. However, the significant presence of more serious psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other psychotic disorders is also important to mention.

It is estimated that the impact of chemical dependency damaged the main family nucleus in about 70% of cases, a clear demonstration of the extent of this problem.

The feeling manifested by those relatives interviewed in relation to drug addiction is primarily one of "sadness" (134 families) together with the feeling of "powerlessness" (126 families).

The types of treatment sought by patients are:

Hospitalization: 56% and/or

Psychologists or therapists: 54% and/or

Religion: 50% and/or

Psychiatrist: 31%

It is important to mention that 61.6% of the respondents did not know about the Psychosocial Attention Centers for Alcohol and Drug Addiction (CAPS-AD).

This scenario could be improved by a wider spread of information regarding existing treatment resources and the expansion of resources that are currently deficient in relation to the total demand.

#### 4.3. "Addiction" Article

At the invitation of the editorial board of the journal "Addiction", a prominent International scientific journal of great impact in the field of Chemical Dependency, we submitted an article in February of 2010 disclosing the history, operation, and ways in which we have contributed to the Brazilian society regarding the area of chemical dependency, as well as the fundamental role of CNPq and Sao Paulo Research Foundation - FAPESP in financing this project.



## **5. National and international events: presentation of papers, courses, seminars, lectures, and round tables**

### 5.1. International Symposium of public policy on alcohol and drug dependence.

We conducted a symposium in May 2009 with the participation of Professor Ralph Hingson, one of the most important figures in the scientific world on the topic of alcohol policy. Professor Hingson is currently the coordinator of the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. In parallel, scientific meetings involving the eminent Professor and the INPAD team were performed with an advisory character for future projects.

### 5.2. Meeting of the Pan American Health Organization - PAHO

In November 2009, the INPAD attended the working meeting of collaborating centers of the Pan American Health Organization, which was held in São Paulo. This meeting provided a rare opportunity to exchange information with various research centers of the Americas in the field of Chemical Dependency, thereby paving the way for future international partnerships.

### 5.3. Disclosure to the Media

The disclosure of important issues related to policies on alcohol and other drugs and the work of the INPAD have been established in the form of published books, interviews in newspapers and magazines, and participation in television programs.

The following books have already been published: "Alcohol Advertising and Young People", "Alcohol and Driving: Either Drink or Drive", "A Practical Guide

for Educators, Health Professionals and Policymakers”, “Family and Addiction: An Experience of Prevention with Children and Adolescents in Jardim Angela”, and “Chemical Dependency Counseling 2nd edition”.

Interviews with members of the INPAD were published in the journal “Anonimos e Brasileiros” (Anonymous and Brazilian) and the newspaper “O Estado de São Paulo” (The state of Sao Paulo). Reports about the research “Either Drink or Drive” were broadcast by TV Globo in Brazil, the television show “SPTV,” and in an interview with Professor Ronaldo Laranjeira, coordinator of the INPAD, which was broadcast by the television news show “Jornal Nacional”, also from the Globo network.

## **6. Educational activities and training of human resources**

Continuing the work started 16 years ago, the Chemical Dependency Courses remain in full activity. Fifty-one students graduated from the chemical dependency counseling course and 123 students graduated from the chemical dependency specialization course during this period.

The doctoral thesis of Dr. Marco Bessa was completed during this period. Dr. Bessa’s defense took place on March 05, 2010. Three other PhD theses are in the final stages and should be completed in the first half of 2011. In addition, new undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students are being selected.

## **7. Perspectives and future developments**

As determined by the management council, and as it was described above, the following research projects will be conducted: the study titled "Health

economics: the cost of drinking and driving" will take place in the first half of 2010 and a study comparing mortality in alcohol-dependent patients in the general population will be held in the second half of 2010. The second survey on patterns of alcohol consumption in our population will occur in early 2011.

In the area of training and development of human resources, the INPAD plans on conducting a course on public policy during the year of 2010. We intend to begin the Master's degree in chemical dependency in 2011/2012..

In conclusion, over the coming months, the INPAD will attempt to expand the network of collaborating centers, both nationally and internationally, as well as prioritize the training of human resources to enhance the work of the institute.