

An update on the activities of WPA Scientific Sections

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Scientific Sections keep on having a prominent position in the working of WPA, especially for promoting and disseminating scientific knowledge around the globe. The current number of Sections has increased to 69, after the establishment of the new Section on HIV/AIDS Psychiatry, chaired by M.A. Cohen.

WPA Sections enjoy a great degree of independence within the framework of the WPA Statutes and By-Laws (1,2). The Section work is supported by an Operational Committee headed by the Secretary for Sections.

During the 2014 World Congress of Psychiatry in Madrid, Section officers attended a special meeting, during which reports were presented about the activities implemented during the triennium 2011-2014. The results of a WPA survey showed that the majority of Sections were fully functional during that period. Organizing sessions at WPA sponsored and co-sponsored meetings was found to be the most common activity (implemented by 88% of Sections). There was also a noticeable increase in the number of WPA co-sponsored meetings organized by individual Sections during 2011-2014. The number of such WPA co-sponsored meetings and conferences (either organized as an independent meeting and/or supported by one of the WPA Scientific Sections) reached a very high number (39 meetings compared to 17 meetings in the triennium 2008-2011). Within the World Congress, 65 symposia and 22 workshops were organized by Sections.

Some Scientific Sections have produced position statements during the triennium (e.g., that on independent medical examinations by the Forensic Psychiatry Section), and others have developed training courses for residents (e.g., that developed by the

Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry).

Several Sections also have officially linked international scientific journals. These include the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *Psychopathology*, *Academic Psychiatry*, *History of Psychiatry*, *Personality and Mental Health*, the *Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*, the *International Journal of Mental Health*, the *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, *Activitas Nervosa Superior*, *Psychiatry in General Practice*, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, and the *Archives of Women's Mental Health*.

The survey also revealed that WPA membership have considerable information on the activities of the WPA Scientific Sections, and 60% of the responding Member Societies rated the impact and visibility of these activities as "excellent" or "good", while the quality of these activities was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 65% of the respondents.

The WPA Action Plan for 2014-2017 (3) was also discussed during the Madrid meeting, with a special emphasis on Sections' future role in developing the theme of promotion of mental health as a targeted action. Sections have indeed started planning various activities looking at a number of aspects of this particular area, with a main focus on producing educational leaflets for the general public, updating the WPA website, preparing slides and educational material for professionals, developing slides and educational material for medical students, providing suggestions for curriculum development for trainees in psychiatry, producing guidelines and consensus statements, organizing scientific sessions at WPA meetings, identifying themes for inter-sectional collaboration, implementing some joint inter-sectional projects, and strengthening links with other allied professional organizations.

The Sections also keep on having their elections every three years, and

it is heartening to note that most of them have elected new members on these positions. This will certainly help WPA in promotion of leadership and involvement of young psychiatrists in the working of the Association.

There will be a prominent participation of Scientific Sections at the forthcoming WPA International Conference in Bucharest (June 2015). An Intersectional Forum is also planned there on the topic of old age psychiatry, and two intersectional educational teaching and training programmes will also take place.

Section officers and members are also contributing extensively to the WPA official journal *World Psychiatry* (4-18). Their interest and participation in the development of the chapter on mental disorders of the ICD-11 is another ongoing contribution to the psychiatric field (19,20).

It is expected that the enthusiasm of Scientific Sections for their WPA work will continue and will bring further contributions to the quality of scientific knowledge and the development of innovative approaches in psychiatric practice.

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