



BOGOTA DECLARATION ON MIGRATION AND MENTAL HEALTH (February 2016)

Background

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) and the Latin American Psychiatric Association (APAL) organized a round table meeting on **"The effect of migration on mental health of the people and their families"** in Bogotá, Colombia, on February 11, 2016.

This conference was attended by the presidents, ex-presidents and representatives of societies of Psychiatry in Latin America and the Caribbean, the president of the WPA, the president and Executive Committee members of APAL, the Unit Chief of Mental Health and Substance Use of PAHO/WHO, members of the Standing Committees of the WPA (the co-chair of the Ethics and Review Committee and a representative of the Publications Committee), zonal representatives of the WPA and the President of the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry.

The statement was approved by the APAL Extraordinary General Assembly on February 12, 2016, and signed by the President of the WPA, the President of the APAL, the Secretaries of the conference, and the participants of the Assembly.

The Bogota declaration¹

It is estimated that Latin America has more than 16 million migrants. A migrant is a person moving who has not yet completed the legal process of applying for asylum. It is well recognised that people migrate due to economic, educational, political or religious reasons.

Many refugees and asylum seekers move for political reasons, as an escape from war or conflict regions. Migrants must be distinguished from refugees and asylum seekers, as often people migrating for economic reasons are confused with them.

WPA and APAL call for action.

POLICY

¹ In this declaration, WPA and APAL does not intend to discuss rural-urban migration.

- We call on all governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide adequate resources in the field of national mental health policies. This may represent additional financial resources required to assess the medical, psychological and social needs of migrants and to develop inter-sectoral collaboration.
- We call upon the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to educate communities, create awareness and protect the legal rights of migrants, especially those from vulnerable groups such as women, children and adolescents, elderly, people with physical and psychological disabilities, and ethnic and sexual minorities.
- We call upon the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to adopt clear policies on human rights of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers; and different sectors of the government (e.g., ministries of health, justice, education, housing, foreign affairs or their equivalent) should be involved in it. Community education, including specifics about mental health should be urgently offered to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- In addition, we call upon the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to unconditionally respect the UN Convention on Refugees (1951).

CLINICAL

- We urge all medical professionals to carry out clinical and social assessments, through the use of standardized tools. You must collect all possible information about the status of people before migration, including resilience and protective factors (i.e., social support networks). In addition, medical professionals should always consider levels of acculturation.
- We call for the dignity of migrants in their cultural, religious and spiritual individuality. There should be no barriers to migrants and their families to seek and receive assistance. Mental health services should be culturally sensitive and emotionally appropriate for that migrants feel welcome. At times, other models such as culturally sensitive approaches could be used.
- Consideration should be given to language and other specific needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

TRAINING

- All medical professionals should be trained in how to use interpreters and cultural skills. Adequate resources for training should be available. Aspects of mental health of migrant people, refugees and asylum seekers should be part of the curriculum for doctors, at all levels. Cultural sensitivity training should be a part of the education of all health professionals.

RESEARCH

- We urge that National governments provide sufficient funding for researching mental health needs of migrants and the impact of policy factors. Adequate resources should be made available according to the needs. Epidemiological factors, as well as qualitative approaches, should be researched. Detailed research may be indicated to access treatment accessibility, acceptability and usage.

The WPA and APAL are committed in working with the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean for the implementation of the above points.

Declaration signed in Bogota, Colombia, by the Extraordinary General Assembly of APAL, dated February 12, 2016.

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Presidente WPA

Dr. Rodrigo Córdoba
Presidente APAL

Dr. Julio Torales
Secretario General
Conferencia sobre Migración

Dr. João Castaldelli-Maia
Secretario General
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Recommended Reading

- Bhugra, D., Gupta, S., Bhui, K., Craig, T., Dogra, N., Ingleby, J. D., ... & Stompe, T. (2011). WPA guidance on mental health and mental health care in migrants. *World Psychiatry*, 10(1), 2-10.
- Bhugra, D., & Gupta, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Migration and mental health*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bhugra, D., Craig, T. K. J., & Bhui, K. (2010). *Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Oxford University Press.
- World Psychiatric Association (2015). Position Statement: Europe Migrant & Refugee Crisis. Geneva, WPA.
- UNHCR (1951): UN Refugee Agency UK. <http://www.unhcr.org.uk>

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