A survey and a report of activities of WPA Scientific Sections

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The purpose of WPA Scientific Sections is the collection, analysis, presentation and dissemination of information concerning services, research and training in the various fields of psychiatry and mental health, and the advancement of scientific knowledge in these fields. According to the WPA By-Laws, the Sections will achieve this purpose by establishing working relations with national and international organizations, organizing scientific meetings and symposia at the World Congress of Psychiatry and other WPA meetings, developing educational programs, guidelines and publications as well as consensus and position statements, and international collaborative research.

The WPA currently has 65 Scientific Sections, representing different areas of interest to the specialty, such as *specific disorders* (addiction psychiatry, affective disorders, anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, impulsivity and impulse control disorders, intellectual disability, pain, personality disorders, schizophrenia, human sexuality,

sleep disorders); *basic and related sciences* (art, biological psychiatry, clinical psychopathology, ecology, economics, epidemiology, genetics, history, informatics and telecommunications, immunology, interdisciplinary collaboration, law and ethics, literature, philosophy and humanities, psychoneurobiology, psychoneuroendocrinology, psychopathology, psychophysiology, religion, transcultural psychiatry); *diagnosis and intervention* (classification, diagnostic assessment and nomenclature, education, measurement instruments, neuroimaging, pharmacopsychiatry, preventive psychiatry, rehabilitation, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy); *special populations and settings* (child and adolescent, conflict management, developing countries, disaster, emergency, exercise and sports, family research and intervention, forensic psychiatry, medicine and primary care, military psychiatry, occupational psychiatry, old age, perinatal and infant mental health, private practice, psycho-oncology, rural mental health, stigma, suicidology, torture and persecution, urban mental health, women); and *other applications* (mass media, public policy, quality assurance, research methods).

Every three years, the WPA Secretary

for Sections must conduct a process of Sections' reinstatement on behalf of the Executive Committee and according to rules specified in the Association's By-Laws. Sections must have at least 20 members; have held in the last 3 years an election for the Section Committee; have presented in the last 3 years at least one symposium at a World Congress and at least one symposium or course at a Regional Meeting or Congress, and/or have prepared educational material authorized to carry the WPA logo by the Executive Committee; and have carried out activities described in their triennial plan of work or presented reasons for not having done so.

The WPA Sections' Chairs received in early 2007 a questionnaire, where information needed for Sections' reinstatement was requested. Only one Section did not send back the questionnaire. Of the remaining Sections, 22 (34%) did not provide enough information or did not meet criteria to be reinstated. All of them have received a specific report from the Secretary for Sections and were requested to take the necessary steps to correct their situation before the Prague Congress.

Most Sections have demonstrated a very good profile in their activities and contributions to their specific field of interest. The organization of scientific sessions within WPA Meetings is the activity most frequently implemented by Sec-

tions, followed by working relations with other organizations. About 60% of Sections have developed activities with WPA Member Societies and with other Sections, produced educational programs, guidelines or publications, collected and disseminated scientific information, and organized scientific meetings. Thirteen Sections have produced consensus or position statements, which usually are valuable materials for Member Societies and psychiatrists around the world.

The number of members (and their geographical distribution in different world regions) is considered a good indicator of a Section vitality and potential to produce and disseminate knowledge from different perspectives: 35 WPA Sections have 20-50 members, 10 Sections have 51-100 members and 8 Sections have more than 100 members.

Besides the yearly publication of hundreds of papers in many different journals around the world, Sections' productions are frequently present in *World*

Psychiatry, the official journal of WPA. Twelve Sections have been publishing their own journal or collaborating in the publication of a journal in their specific area of interest. Some other journals are currently being considered to be included in the WPA publications roster.

During this triennium, six research projects proposed by WPA Sections were supported by some institutional funding (1).

Besides providing the required information for their reinstatement, WPA Sections were also asked to report about their main needs and expectations. The main need – mentioned by 24 Sections – was funding for various activities. Other major needs mentioned were to enlarge membership and make it more representative of the various regions of the world, and a greater visibility of Sections in the WPA website.

Sections also emphasized the need for a more active communication among

themselves and with WPA Member Societies and other components of the Association (such as Zonal Representatives). Sections also expressed their wish to be more actively involved in WPA meetings, publications, and task forces, and in congresses organized by Member Societies.

All WPA Sections are expected to be present at the World Congress of Psychiatry in Prague. Besides developing scientific activities, they will have a business meeting where elections of new officers will take place.

Psychiatrists from all over the world are invited to join WPA Scientific Sections according to their areas of interest. No fee is required.

Reference

1. Jorge MR. Advancement of scientific knowledge through international collaborative research. *World Psychiatry* 2006;5: 190-2.