

NIDA International Program Historical Accomplishments, 1990 – 2008

NIDA has incorporated international research and training activities as part of its mission since the Institute's inception, beginning with simple information exchanges and progressing to research training, binational and multinational professional meetings, and collaborative agreements. In the three decades since NIDA's beginning, the Institute's International Program has created a network of scientists who collaborate on drug abuse research nationally, regionally, and globally. The International Program administers programs that: (1) take advantage of unique opportunities to advance scientific knowledge through research, (2) address the global impact of addiction on public health through activities that build research capacity internationally, and (3) effectively disseminate and share the knowledge gained through NIDA-supported research. As the International Program and its partners matured, the breadth and scope of NIDA's international activities have expanded to include funding announcements to support and stimulate international collaborative research projects. These efforts focus on building research partnerships between NIDA grantees in the United States and collaborators in other countries. This chronicle highlights the programs that are the foundation for our journey forward.

- 1990** In 1990, NIDA created the first formal mechanism to help carry out its vision for international cooperation, the International Visiting Scientists and Technical Exchange Program (INVEST). NIDA INVEST agreed to sponsor a unique component of a U.S. Department of State fellowship program. NIDA Hubert H. Humphrey Drug Abuse Research Fellowships are competitive, 10-month fellowships for mid-career professionals from low- and middle-income countries. Fellows enroll at a pre-eminent U.S. university, complete a research affiliation with a NIDA grantee, participate in scientific meetings, and attend NIDA orientations. NIDA has supported 60 Humphrey Fellows from 34 nations.
- 1991** The International Program first created a vehicle to disseminate research results in 1991 when it began publishing the INVEST Letter, which was replaced by the more cost-effective and timely E-News Letter in November 2004. The science-based information generated by NIDA researchers and the International Program alumni contributes to international efforts to develop, adopt, and evaluate government policies, prevention programs, and treatment protocols that effectively address drug abuse and its consequences.
- 1993** The International Program created a competitive, postdoctoral fellowship for drug abuse researchers from other countries. INVEST Drug Abuse Research Fellowships are 12-month appointments to U.S. institutions. Since the inception of the program, 42 INVEST Fellows from 22 nations have conducted research, attended NIDA orientations, and participated in scientific meetings.
- 1994** The International Program published *Methadone Maintenance Treatment in the United States: Questions and Answers*, a compilation of research findings to help health researchers and policymakers in other nations evaluate what role methadone maintenance treatment might play in treating drug addictions in their own countries. NIDA and the World Health Organization agreed to cosponsor the WHO/NIDA/CPDD International Traveling Fellowships in conjunction with the Congress on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD) Annual Meeting. The International Traveling Fellowships have allowed 29 researchers from 17 nations to participate in the NIDA International Forum

and the CPDD Annual Scientific Meeting and to conduct research visits with NIDA grantees in the United States.

- 1996** Cooperative efforts between NIDA and Russian scientists were formalized when Pavlov Medical University, St. Petersburg, created the St. Petersburg Center on Drug Abuse Research, a consortium of institutions similar to NIDA in its range of research, and the two organizations signed an Exchange of Letters. This first NIDA International Program Binational agreement played a significant role in developing research capacity, as Russian researchers from Pavlov Medical University advanced from junior partners on NIDA domestic grants with foreign components to successful competitors in both the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the global research support arenas. The first NIDA International Forum was held as a satellite to the CPDD meeting; 65 researchers from 21 nations participated.
- 1999** NIDA and the primary components of the Dutch Addiction Program (DAP), The Netherlands Health Research and Development Council (ZONMw) and The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), signed a formal Exchange of Letters agreeing to promote development of binational research teams. The program involves a true binational collaboration between NIDA and DAP focusing on independent, but linked, binational research teams. Research projects proposed by teams of U.S. and Dutch scientists are first evaluated independently by reviewers within each country, next by a binational committee, and then the most meritorious projects are funded—NIDA provides support for the U.S. partner, and DAP provides support for the Dutch partner. This uniquely successful binational agreement has become the model for future NIDA International Program agreements.
- 2000** The International Program created the Distinguished International Scientist Collaboration Awards (DISCA) based on feedback from NIDA grantees and staff, who noted that exchange visits among accomplished scientists from different countries could stimulate development of innovative research. The result- and product-oriented awards have allowed 13 senior drug abuse scientists from 11 nations to work with NIDA grantees in the United States.
- 2002** NIDA created an administrative supplement program targeted specifically to support international collaborative drug abuse research by grantees with existing R01 and R21 grants (NOT-DA-02-003). The International Program provided \$1.8 million to fund 22 projects in 16 nations through that announcement. NIDA also created the South African Initiative to support research conducted by NIDA.
- 2003** NIDA issued a Program Announcement, International Research Collaboration on Drug Addiction (PAS-03-023), to solicit new R01 applications from U.S. and foreign research teams. During the life of the Program Announcement, which expired shortly after the end of Fiscal Year 2005, more than 75 research grant proposals were submitted and six projects received \$3.7 million. The U.S.-Netherlands Collaboration continued with \$475,000 in funding for four new collaborative projects.
- 2004** The International Program expanded the DISCA program to permit U.S. citizens and permanent residents to travel to their research partner's country through the NIDA Distinguished International Scientist Collaboration Awards for U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents (USDISCA). The first

USDISCA-supported research visit was announced in Fiscal Year 2005, and two NIDA grantees have since traveled to two countries. Through a second round of administrative supplements (NOT-DA-04-004), the International Program provided \$1.5 million to fund 18 projects in 11 nations. The redesigned International Program Web page (www.international.drugabuse.gov) provides information and links on NIDA's international mission, opportunities, and recent meetings. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) signed an agreement with the Mexican Ministry of Health to collaborate on binational drug abuse research, naming NIDA and CONADIC as the respective countries' lead agencies. NIDA and the Spanish National Plan on Drugs (PNSD) also signed a binational agreement.

- 2005** A third round of U.S.-Netherlands supplements provided \$300,000 to fund three new projects. The International Program partnered with the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE) to provide seed money for the development of Web-based resources to assist international researchers in publishing their results, such as tools to help identify appropriate substance abuse journals, tutorials on scientific writing, and guidance in responding to reviewer critiques. The 10th NIDA International Forum was held at CPDD; more than 300 participants registered from 51 nations. The International Program expanded its efforts to develop Internet-based applications that could provide relatively low-cost training, education, and communication in the research arena by supporting planning efforts for an international master's degree in addiction studies and issuing two Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) contracts.
- 2006** NIDA issued the International Research Collaboration on Drug Addiction Program Announcement (PA-06-050) soliciting collaborative research proposals on drug abuse and addiction that take advantage of unusual talent, resources, populations, or environmental conditions in other countries; speed scientific discovery; and meet NIDA research priorities. NIDA and the editors of *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* published a peer-reviewed journal supplement on the intertwined epidemics of HIV and drug abuse. *Drug Abuse and HIV/AIDS: International Research Lessons and Imperatives* included research from 15 countries; approximately half of the studies received NIDA support, and several authors were former NIDA International Program Fellows. NIDA launched a Latin American Initiative designed to increase training in areas such as diagnosis, data analysis, and clinical trials; stimulate the creation of regional networks to improve surveillance and research activities; expand NIDA's library of Spanish-language resources; provide information useful to policymakers; and promote a multi-site epidemiological study of HIV risk behaviors. The NIDA International Program became a component of the Office of the Director to enhance the International Program's ability to advance NIDA's mission by fostering international cooperation in drug abuse and addiction research, while integrating NIDA's Divisional research priorities and crosscutting research issues within the framework of NIDA, NIH, and HHS health policy as well as U.S. economic and foreign policy considerations.
- 2007** NIDA reissued the International Research Collaboration on Drug Addiction Program Announcement soliciting collaborative research proposals using three grant mechanisms: R01, PA-07-275; R03, PA-07-311; and R21, PA-07-310. Proposals must take advantage of unusual talent, resources, populations, or environmental conditions in other countries; speed scientific discovery; and

meet NIDA research priorities. NIDA announced administrative supplements, and the Dutch Addiction Program (DAP) announced the availability of Administrative Supplements to Support U.S.-Netherlands Binational Collaborative Research on Drug Abuse (NOT-DA-07-003) to continue the successful model of joint funding for binational collaborative research. NIDA and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) established the CICAD/NIDA Competitive Research Awards to support drug epidemiology in Organization of American States member nations. The NIDA International Program introduced its *Methadone Research Web Guide*, which reviews methadone maintenance treatment research findings in an easy-to-use question and answer format. This online version updates research findings and revises a 1995 print version with new sections on methadone treatment effectiveness and regulatory requirements in the international community. The International Program and the NIDA Center for Clinical Trials Network (CTN) created the INVEST/CTN Fellowship in Drug Abuse Treatment Research for non-U.S. scientists who will spend their INVEST Fellowship year working with a mentor affiliated with one of the 17 CTN Regional Research and Training Centers.

2008 The NIDA International Program supported a new initiative funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada to investigate volatile solvent abuse among indigenous populations in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Australia. Several new online training and collaboration tools were introduced, such as the Methadone Research Web Guide Tutorial and the NIDA International Virtual Collaboratory (NIVC), which is home to the NIDA International Program fellowships AlumniNet. In Fiscal Year 2008, NIDA committed \$1.5 million for international research collaborations to study HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, three binational tobacco research awards to support transdisciplinary research and capacity building in low- or middle-income nations, and 18 pre- or postdoctoral research awards to young investigators in eight Latin American countries. The International Program created a new international poster session at the Society for Prevention Research Annual Meeting and helped found the Latin American Epidemiological Network (REDLA).