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Editorial

Special Issue on the International Conference on Global Health

Drug abuse persists as a major problem that severely impacts both individual and public health, locally as well as globally. It is well known that human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and other blood-borne diseases can be transmitted through needle-sharing among injecting drug users, but less is known of the other roles of drug abuse in general. A person under the influence of drugs may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as unsafe sex. Thus, the International Conference on Global Health (ICGH) was organized and held at Taipei Howard Civil Service International House, Taipei, Taiwan on April 17–19, 2013. The main theme was the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and HIV, focusing on Asia and Pacific Island regions.

Besides Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare, the organizers included Taiwan's National Health Research Institute, the United States National Institute on Drug Abuse and the University of California, Los Angeles, USA. Dr Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and Dr Gilberto Gerra, Chief of the Drug Prevention and Health Branch at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, gave keynote speeches. The ICGH attracted more than 400 distinguished scholars and experts from the United States, Canada, China, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as local scholars and experts.

The ICGH provided a platform to exchange opinions and information. We discussed the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders and HIV, and developed relevant preventive strategies. The diversity of the approaches and challenges was reflected by the various topics presented in different sessions, highlighting up-to-date biological and behavioral approaches to address the health consequences of substance abuse disorders and HIV. Drug treatment programs can serve as important roles in providing current information on HIV-related diseases, offering counseling and testing services, and possibly making referrals to medical and social

services. In addition, we can avoid the harms of substance abuse through work on health education and prevention programs. As the ICGH has effectively promoted information exchange among countries, we will establish an international network to reduce the negative consequences of drug abuse and HIV infection.

The ICGH shared research findings, stimulated international collaboration between the United States and Asia-Pacific countries, and highlighted cultural aspects of treatment and prevention. We especially thank our keynote speakers, Dr Volkow and Dr Gerra, as well as the contributing authors of this ICGH special issue and conference participants, for their stimulating comments and encouragement. We are grateful to the National Health Research Institute, and Dr Yih-Ing Hser, Director of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Advancing Longitudinal Drug Abuse Research, for the realization of this excellent 3-day conference. We gratefully acknowledge the Food and Drug Administration for the publication of this ICGH special issue in the *Journal of Food and Drug Analysis*.

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