

## NEWS / ISSUP

### ● INTRODUCING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SUBSTANCE USE PROFESSIONALS (ISSUP)

The International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP) is a non-profit, global membership organisation that was formally established in 2016. ISSUP currently has over 21,000 members from more than 190 nations and territories. ISSUP links and supports the individuals working in the field of drug demand reduction across the world. Its members represent professionals and other individuals who operate in a range of roles, from (for example) senior positions within public health and education provision at policy and practice level through to interested individuals such as parents, each having their own role and contribution to address issues of drug demand reduction.

ISSUP's primary objective is to promote and realise the vision of a connected, trained, knowledgeable and effective professional workforce, able to promote and deliver high quality, evidence-based and ethical policy, practice and research in the field of drug demand reduction and its constituents of prevention, treatment, and recovery support.

#### **ISSUP undertakes its work through three major activities:**

**i. It's digital provision**, including the website which incorporates a range of outputs, including on-line forums, knowledge exchange, member directory, professional development opportunities, an events calendar, resources, and information on ISSUP's other work. ISSUP also has a range of digital communications keeping the workforce up to date on development opportunities.

**ii. Provision of professional support and development** through training, webinars and major events and conferences both in person and online, with one key ISSUP event per year.

**iii. National Chapters:** focal points hosted by local organisations, that offer the services and support from ISSUP but at the National level. The Chapters, which currently number 23 operate in all parts of the world and allow ISSUP to adapt to the in-country needs of the workforce, as well as learn from country activity and research.

Substance use disorders are a matter of international concern and know no political boundaries. ISSUP seeks to offer a major contribution to that international community in providing relevant information, knowledge and research findings that will enable drug demand reduction professionals, policy makers – and of course ISSUP members – to be better equipped to promote and undertake and support evidence-based work in respect to substance use issues.

The opportunity for ISSUP to build a partnership with Addictology to progress the strong relationship with Charles University in Prague offers great potential to provide a unique contribution to the field of drug demand reduction that will present real value to researcher, policy makers and practitioners. ISSUP welcomes this opportunity to work together to grow and develop an international journal devoted to publishing peer-reviewed interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific reports on psychoactive substance use. ISSUP seeks to become a significant stakeholder and an official strategic partner in the provision of the Addictology Journal.

ISSUP is particularly keen to promote the transfer of international research into practice. ISSUP is dedicated to making the Journal's articles relevant and accessible to practitioners. This collaboration between ISSUP and the Journal continually supports translation of science to practice and policy. It is devoted to making substance use research accessible and content available for all users with no limitations as an open access Journal.

Each edition of the Journal will have a section from ISSUP to keep readers informed about its events, scientific contributions, conferences, trainings, news, membership, and National Chap-

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ters. In this issue we present information on recent and forthcoming remarkable events and contributions by ISSUP:

- ISSUP participation in EUSPR conference 2021 and its presentation of an oral poster entitled ‘Maintaining the Provision for Professional Development in the COVID Era: Three Practical Examples’
- Looking ahead to the 2022 ISSUP Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi: Uniting the global community to face the challenge of addiction
- ISSUP Membership information and benefits

ISSUP thanks those who have made it possible to collaborate on this important initiative of Addictology becoming one of the major journals for those working in the drug demand reduction field. We hope our readers will feel able to provide feedback on what we provide – or ought to provide – and of course that they find the material presented in the Journal relevant, accessible, and informative in progressing their professional contributions to this vital area of work.

For further information about ISSUP please visit [www.issup.net](http://www.issup.net)

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### ● MAINTAINING THE PROVISION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COVID ERA: THREE PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

ISSUP participated in the European Society of Prevention Research (EUSPR) 2021 Conference which took place online from the 29th of September to the 1st of October by presenting an oral poster that focussed on three practical examples of provision offered in the COVID era by ISSUP.

The theme of the conference, which was chosen to encourage presenters to comment on the impact of COVID 19 on prevention research and practice, was ‘*Prevention in a COVID Recovery Society*’.

As an international organisation, ISSUP is used to relying on digital means for communications, however since the global pandemic, it has had to substantially increase its provision of online services in order to maintain its service to the global drug demand reduction community.

Having adapted the work within ISSUP significantly so as to continue to provide educational support and networking opportunities for prevention practitioners during the pandemic, we were able to share examples of our work from the past two years through the EUSPR conference input. During the conference, ISSUP Scientific Support Team presented an oral poster that highlighted the following three examples of the ways we have adapted our work during the covid pandemic:

#### **1. ‘Introduction to Evidence-based Prevention’ (INEP) PLUS training programme:**

The Introduction to Evidence-based Prevention (INEP) is a self-led online training course that was developed by Charles University (CUNI). ISSUP has trained 40 facilitators from 20 ISSUP National Chapters to provide a facilitator-led version of INEP.

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### 2. 'Drug Demand Reduction in Africa: Prevention, Treatment and Epidemiology' virtual conference:

In collaboration with our National Chapter in South Africa and international partner organisations, in particular the African Union, ISSUP organised its first online conference last fall. It was a series of six online plenaries, and it brought together national and international experts. Over 5,000 people from 117 countries joined the conference.

### 3. ISSUP Webinar education provision:

Prior to the pandemic, ISSUP organized one webinar a month. Since April 2020 More than 100 webinars have been held, with over than 26,000 participants from 100+ countries participating and offered in a total of 12 different languages.

All 3 contributions have received substantial positive feedback from those who were involved as providers or participants. Some of the comments are included on our [poster](#).

As part of our presentation, we reflected on the benefits of online educational training and knowledge exchange as well as some of the other lessons we have learned. We will use these to inform the development of future ISSUP activities and projects.

### Lessons learnt

Apart from preventing the spread of coronavirus, there have been many other advantages to moving online. For example, by holding an online "activity" rather than an in-person event, the barriers to participation, such as the cost of travel and accommodation, have been removed. Working with interpreters has allowed us to communicate with members who otherwise would have been unable to engage with the content being presented.

In addition to making conference and webinar recordings freely available, we have published related resources, which has allowed participants to engage in knowledge exchange beyond the event and addresses the issue of time differences. This has allowed people to attend the webinar at a time acceptable to them.

In summary, in a time of restriction, we believe we have increased access to information and professional development opportunities through addressing key issues such as location, cultural and language differences of our members. Focusing our efforts on improving our online provision has taught us how to strengthen learning for professionals beyond pandemic constraints and how to be more efficient and effective in delivering capacity building provision.

Whereas there are undoubtedly benefits of online provision, there are critical challenges that we continue to reflect on. According to feedback from INEP Plus training, people do miss the interaction between other members of the group, which fosters bonding, creates a positive group dynamic, and can enhance the learning experience. This raises questions that merit additional investigation, such as how does peer bonding influence the learning environment during training activity? What is the value and impact of the three approaches to training – self-led, online, and face-to face? Is face-to-face training more effective than virtual teaching?

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In terms of webinars and conferences, while we have reached far greater numbers of participants, we need to investigate if the quality and depth of the experience might be affected when events are delivered online? Although we support Q&A sessions and have set up online forums to promote additional discussion, we wonder whether less interaction with the presenter and other participants inhibits critical analysis and reflexivity. Further research on how individuals participate in online learning experiences, such as webinars, will be beneficial in determining how to enhance the way we facilitate the learning process.

As ISSUP will continue to plan online training, we will be addressing additional key questions of concerns, such as the distinction between quality and quantity; the impact and outcomes resulting from the COVID era virtual learning provision and what they offer for the future; and perhaps most importantly from an ISSUP perspective is what approaches are the most effective and evidence-based in terms of learning experience and professional development. As we face an unprecedented situation there is a lot to learn as the evidence base on online learning and professional development increases.

Moving forward, we will embrace this time as a learning opportunity and adapt our approach by offering a blend of both digital and in person experiences when it is safe to do so. We also hope that the questions we have raised will be addressed and explored in future studies so results can inform our practice and work in professionalising the drug demand reduction workforce.



## Introduction

ISSUP is an international non-government membership organisation providing a focal point for the development of professional competence in the field of prevention, treatment and recovery support. Its focus is to promote high quality, evidence-based and ethical policy and practice.

Throughout the COVID period and with the reduction in "normal" opportunities for communication, learning and sharing, ISSUP has offered a range of "virtual" inputs to help maintain its contribution to the prevention, treatment and recovery support community.



### 3 Three examples of how ISSUP has adapted in order to provide support, educational guidance and networking opportunities for its members and for the global drug demand reduction workforce.

#### INEP Training

The Introduction to Evidence-based Prevention (INEP) was written and developed by Charles University (CUN). INEP Plus is a training initiative from ISSUP to provide facilitators for it to become a facilitated training programme provided by ISSUP National Chapters.

**Description and Figures:**

- INEP is a self-led 10 session online Prevention programme to introduce prevention to new learners
- INEP Plus offers trained ISSUP National Chapter facilitators to support delivery of the INEP content provision
- The training of facilitators was through 12 weekly 2 hour virtual meetings
- 2 facilitators from each of 20 National Chapters
- Evaluation: pre and post questionnaire plus evaluation feedback from participants
- Next step: National Chapter in-country facilitated courses

**Feedback:**

"I am thankful to have the opportunity to attend this course which changed my point of view regarding prevention as a science."

"Thank you for pulling me from my comfort zone and being able to express my thoughts even with the language mistakes."

"The course was a great learning curve for me not only professionally but also personally."

#### Africa Conference 2020

The "Drug Demand Reduction in Africa: Prevention, Treatment and Epidemiology" Virtual Conference brought together national and international experts in the field of substance use prevention, treatment, and epidemiology.

**Description and Figures:**

- 6 plenary sessions
- 11,485 registrants
- 5,054 attendees
- 117 countries
- Webinars translation: 4 languages
- Hosted by ISSUP South Africa
- Date: September - November 2020

**Feedback:**

"It was a great privilege for me to be part of this plenary and it was a great and educative session."

"A fantastic conference. Looking forward to the next ones."

"I have no doubt that such professional events (e.g. conferences, training events, etc.) are the ones that will bring about positive changes in behaviour, one of the required elements towards curbing drug craving and abuse."

#### ISSUP Webinars

ISSUP Webinars provide opportunities for those working in substance use prevention, treatment and recovery support to learn and develop through being in direct contact with experts.

ISSUP has worked closely with international organisations, research institutions and the ISSUP National Chapters in order to deliver a programme of webinars that showcases the latest research and practice from around the world.

**Description and Figures:**

- 100 webinars since April 2020
- 26,424 total number of attendees
- 100 plus countries engaged
- Webinars delivered in 12 languages

**Feedback:**

"Excellent presentation and very informative lessons learnt."

"That was a powerful session! We need more of these to create awareness as we help our society."

"Thanks again for your efforts bringing the best experts to a very interested community!"

### The COVID Era Provision: Lessons Learnt

#### Benefits

- International reach and engagement
- Barriers to participation removed
- Cost free
- Range of issues addressed responding to needs
- Focused provision for targeted groups
- New audiences reached
- Training / facilitation skills commercialised
- Access to a significant amount of learning material during and post events
- Usability of virtual platform and interpretation services
- Collaboration with international organisations
- Range of international experts contribute

#### Concerns

- No personal interaction
- What is the true level of engagement?
- Quantity or quality debate
- How to progress when issues opened?
- Access to support
- False claims for learning and expertise
- Lack of interactive sessions/networking
- Time limitation: Difficult to provide in-depth discussion
- Continuing education credits not available
- Adequate training and/or follow up and documentation for participants?
- Maintenance of engagement and interest in virtual provision

#### Questions as we move forward

- Do the benefits of online "virtual" provision outweigh that of "face-to-face" teaching and learning?
- What is the evidence-base for best practice in training delivery and achievement?
- Do people learn better when working through a curriculum themselves or if led by a teacher / trainer / facilitator?
- Do some online formats work better than others?
- Where is the line to be drawn between quality and quantity of provision?

To learn more about ISSUP and to join as a member (no cost), please visit [issup.net](https://issup.net) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn [f](https://www.facebook.com/issupnet) [t](https://twitter.com/issupnet) [in](https://www.linkedin.com/company/issupnet) @issupnet

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### ● **LOOKING AHEAD TO THE 2022 ISSUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE: UNITING THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY TO FACE THE CHALLENGE OF ADDICTION**

In May 2022, join colleagues and allies from around the world for the ISSUP Annual Workshop and Conference.

ISSUP, ICUDDR, INL and NRC are partnering to provide this opportunity for our international network to come together online and in-person for networking, training, and discussion from the 11th to 16th of May 2022 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

#### **Connect with peers and learn from the best in drug demand reduction**

The 2022 Annual Conference will deliver the latest learning from the fields of substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery support under the theme of *Uniting the global community to face the challenge of addiction*. Keynote speakers and sub-plenaries will share new research findings on topics of relevance and pertinence to current and future challenges faced by the global drug demand reduction workforce.

Side meetings, networking events, forums and social activities will allow for professional networking and important discussions on addiction policy, practice, and research. The event is an opportunity to improve linkages between people working in drug demand reduction globally and discuss current issues that impact our work and our future.

#### **Hosting on-site and virtual attendees at the same time**

The conference will follow a hybrid in-person and online format over three-days with the main event taking place at the ADNEC in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Our aim is to widen participation to include those who might not be able or willing to travel.

To make the event more inclusive and to allow international speakers and delegates to contribute to the conference remotely, a week-long stream of online sessions will allow virtual presentations and updates on substance use situations and initiatives from around the world.

#### **Training and professional development**

In common with previous ISSUP workshops, there will be in-person opportunities to join a programme of trainings, including the exam for International Certified Addiction Professional (ICAP).

We are pleased to announce the following trainings by international partners:

- Universal Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Curricula – Colombo Plan/NRC
- Treating Adolescents with Substance Use Disorders – CICAD
- Policymaker Training – UNODC
- Community Coalitions – CADCA
- Drug Free Workplace – DFAF
- Global Trainers – UNODC
- Alternatives to Incarceration

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### Celebrating excellence

Join us to celebrate our 2022 ISSUP Award recipients at a special event highlighting the exceptional contributions to the field made by our members. The Awards celebration will be included in your conference registration.

Further information forthcoming.

### ● REGISTER FOR THE ISSUP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION

We are excited to share details of this year's ISSUP international conference with our readers. *Evidence-based principles for effective drug demand reduction: Applying theory to practice* is a three-day event scheduled for 8th, 9th & 10th December 2021, that will focus on deepening the understanding of what is meant by "evidence-based" and consider how the research on what constitutes an evidence-based approach can be transferred to the domain of practical application.

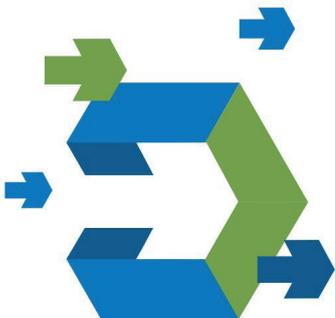
This event will be relevant to anyone working in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery support including health professionals working at the research and practice levels.

Conference presentations will take a case study approach allowing research on the evidence-based approach being recommended to be followed by a practical case study of how that research has been translated and applied to the situation within a particular ISSUP National Chapter country.

Join four plenary sessions to hear in-depth presentations on how drug demand reduction can be undertaken based on sound research and evidence-based principles.

There will be an introductory session on the first day to address what the term "evidence-based" means and its importance for the field of drug demand reduction.

The conference will be held virtually as a live event due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, and participants will be able to join the meeting and take part in Q&A sessions virtually.



**Evidence-based principles for  
effective drug demand reduction:**

**Applying theory  
to practice**

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### Registration

Please click [here](#) to view the full conference programme, presenter information, and to register for plenary sessions.

- All participants are asked to register electronically.
- There is no registration fee for participants.
- Certificates of participation available

We look forward to welcoming you to the event.

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### ● ISSUP MEMBERSHIP

ISSUP provides access to a wide range of benefits to help develop your knowledge and career. Membership is free and we have grades that suit everyone from experienced prevention, treatment, and recovery support professionals and researchers to students, volunteers, or anyone with an active interest in this field.

### Why become a member?

- Join an international network of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery professionals undertaking and promoting high-quality, evidence based, and ethical practice.
- Participate in online discussion groups, webinars, in-person events, and regional initiatives such as our National Chapter Network.
- Access training, education, and opportunities to gain professional qualifications and credentials.

### Member benefits

We are always refining features and adding to the benefits available to our members. Apply today and begin to receive the benefits outlined below:

- Access our Professional Development Hub, take courses and gain qualifications (face-to-face and online).
- Access a range of online tools for networking and sharing your knowledge.
- Receive our twice monthly Newsletter and regular event notifications.
- Find national and international networking opportunities.
- Attend annual ISSUP workshops with benefits for members.
- Access the ISSUP Member Directory and create your own professional profile
- Sign up to a code of ethics.
- Information for students and early career professionals.

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### Individual Membership Categories

#### **Drug Demand Reduction Professional Membership**

for those who have specific qualifications, expertise and experience directly linked to the drug demand reduction field.

#### **Professional Membership**

for those that are undertaking a role that contributes to the drug demand reduction field, even if not necessarily a specialist.

#### **Regular Membership**

for interested, non-professional applicants (can include volunteers, family members or non-accredited community members).

#### **Student Membership**

for those attending an educational institution or attending training (in any field) containing a drug demand reduction component.

### How do I join ISSUP?

Read the [membership guide](#) to learn more about what we offer and [apply online here](#).