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◆ HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2022 ABU DHABI CONFERENCE

After two years of virtual sessions, the conference *Uniting the Global Community to Face the Challenge of Addiction* was held in-person in Abu Dhabi between May 12th–16th. Over 2000 prevention, treatment, and recovery support professionals from around the world attended the meeting and over 200 abstracts encompassing the latest studies were presented by researchers. The plenary sessions provided excellent opportunities for discussion and Q&A rounds involving in-person delegates.



Photograph 1 | Delegates gathered in the ADNEC main hall for the Opening Ceremony on Day 1 of the Conference

The event was a collaboration between the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP), UAE host organisation the National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC), the International Consortium of Universities for Drug Demand Reduction (ICUDDR), and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

Following in the wake of a global pandemic that brought mental health and wellbeing to the forefront of public policy discussions in many countries, the event provided a timely platform for raising awareness of substance use disorders as both treatable and preventable conditions.

Here are some of the highlights from the conference.

Stronger strategic partnerships

The conference was the first event of this size in the field of substance use since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. Given the scale of the drug use challenge worldwide, it provided an important platform for building a global network of strategic partnerships between organisations and specialists in the field of substance use disorders.

The event hosted the official launch of the International Care Quality (ICQ) Consortium on Friday 13th of May. The ICQ Consortium will make a significant contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals of improving the quality of substance use treatment globally and strengthening international, national, and local initiatives to pilot and implement quality assurance in drug treatment services and systems.

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A new Global Dialogue on Drug Demand Reduction between Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean was launched by the African Union in a technical session attended by representatives of partner organisations active in drug control. This new dialogue creates fresh opportunities for international collaboration to address today's most pressing substance use challenges.



Photograph 2 | Representatives from all over Africa attending the African Union Commission (AUC) Continental Consultation, 12–16th May 2022

Promoting research uptake and evidence-based practice

The conference provided a much-needed opportunity to share knowledge about scientific and research endeavour in the drug demand reduction field, alongside providing a platform to discuss new developments in the use of research evidence and increasing the effectiveness of interventions.

Keynotes, plenaries, and sub-plenary sessions explored experiences and lessons learnt from researchers around the world on generating and using evidence, with case studies from frontline service provision and targeted interventions.

Presentations covered a wide range of subject areas including drug policy, epidemiology, stigma, the role of family, technology, and education. The important role of civil society in promoting drug demand reduction policies was also discussed.

On the second day an entire conference track was dedicated to examining what works in treating clients involved with the justice system, and how to unlock opportunities for treatment as an alternative to incarceration.

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Dr. Michal Miovsky, President of ICUDDR and Head of the Department of Addictology at Charles University in Prague, lauded the partnership between research and practice represented at the conference, commenting that: *“Combining policy makers, practitioners, and scientists/educators to learn and work together to address alcohol and drug use issues provides a unique opportunity. In much of the world policy and practice is driven by mistaken beliefs rather than what current science tells us is best practice. We must work together to ensure we are addressing these problems effectively and efficiently.”*



Photograph 3 |
Rasha Abi Hana and Michal Miovsky present Addictology Journal and ISSUP at the Workforce sub-plenary on Day 2, Friday 13th of May 2022

Engaging the next generation

ISSUP and partners were delighted to host the 3rd Global Forum for Youth Leaders on Substance Use Prevention with both in-person and virtual representatives taking part in this year’s event.

The Youth Forum allowed dynamic young changemakers to gather and represent their countries during five days of activities culminating in the submission of a global youth declaration at the closing ceremony.

Youth representatives participating in this year’s event have been helping their communities by developing innovative programmes for preventing substance use. Trainings and workshops enabled participants to share information and develop these projects with feedback and assistance from expert facilitators.

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Adapting ISSUP events to changing circumstances

Our goal has always been to make every ISSUP workshop and conference as inclusive and accessible as possible. To achieve this, we recognised the need to provide options for immersive online participation at this year’s event. It was the first time ISSUP purposely designed a hybrid conference experience that enabled round-the-clock virtual participation and interaction alongside the in-person programme.

An online event ran 24hrs a day, every day throughout the duration of the conference and workshops that followed. This allowed us to provide a total of 155 hours of online viewing made up of live broadcasts and pre-recorded content.

The content included 77 Country Reports, ISSUP National Chapter and member presentations, 38 research sub-pleenary presentations, 27 Partner Profiles, and 9 recorded workshops sessions hosted by NRC.

The online event brought us many different voices and inspirational stories from around the world, and we heard diverse perspectives on the issue of substance misuse and how associated challenges transcend national boundaries.

Explore the event

The hybrid event was a great success and we have visualised key insights in the infographic on the next page to celebrate the contributions of partners, speakers and everyone who attended in-person or virtually. A wealth of content is now available on-demand for you to enjoy. Please visit [our website](#) to watch the free online event recordings.



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◆ BECOME AN ISSUP MEMBER

ISSUP represents a thriving international network of professionals and practitioners, from a wide variety of backgrounds, undertaking and promoting high-quality, evidence based, and ethical practice.

Why join ISSUP?

ISSUP is free to join, and we have grades of membership to suit everyone from experienced prevention, treatment, and recovery support professionals and researchers to students, volunteers, or anyone with an active interest in this field.

We are always refining our services and adding to the wide range of benefits available to our members. ISSUP membership enables you to:

- Take courses (face-to-face and online) developed by our partners and gain qualifications through the ISSUP Professional Development Hub.
- Create your own member profile and share your work, projects, and events via our website.
- Join regional and topic focused discussion groups.
- Receive our twice monthly Newsletter and get regular event notifications.
- Find national and international networking opportunities.
- Attend annual ISSUP workshops with benefits for members.
- Contact other members using the ISSUP Member Directory.
- Sign up to a code of ethics.
- Receive information and resources for students and early career professionals.

Individual Membership Categories

We offer a choice of four categories of membership:

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.

Apply Online

For more information and to submit an online application please see our [membership page](#).