

OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION

CTAC leads the Interagency Working Group for Technology (IAWG-T) composed of technology representatives from the national drug control agencies. The IAWG-T meets periodically to exchange information regarding agency programs and common technical problems. Each year, the IAWG-T provides an updated listing of priority scientific and technological needs by technology area and agency, a listing of drug-related R&D projects being sponsored by each agency, and an Annual Report on the Development and Deployment of Narcotics Detection Technologies. The annual report is provided in Appendix D to this Blueprint Update.

CTAC sponsors outreach activities including technology workshops, technical symposia, and conferences. These activities promote the exchange of information and provide another mechanism to oversee and coordinate counterdrug technology initiatives throughout the scientific and academic communities and with federal, state, and local drug control agencies.

Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Forensic Drug Samples (SWGDRUG)

SWGDRUG was formed in 1997 to initiate and develop minimum standards for the identification of drug exhibits in forensic science laboratories. CTAC has sponsored the SWGDRUG meetings in support of DEA, which serves as the principal organizer. Meetings are international in scope with participation from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, and the United Nations.

In 2001, the first set of recommendations covering Methods and Reports, Education and Training, and Quality Assurance were disseminated to the international forensic science community. This project has resulted in a significant upgrading of forensic science laboratories with implementation of the recommendations. SWGDRUG Part II convened with a meeting in Arlington, Virginia, January 6-8, 2003, with continued international representation.

Technology Symposia

CTAC held the seventh ONDCP Technology Symposium in July 2002 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This conference was dedicated exclusively to demand reduction issues to determine the technology challenges that limit drug abuse prevention and treatment research. Some 180 people were in attendance, representing academia, medicine, government and industry. Over 40 scientists presented their research findings and suggestions for future directions over a two-day period.

Presentations on the first day focused on the research areas that CTAC/NIDA-supported scientists are exploring to develop better treatment and prevention strategies. The second day concentrated on the physical element improvements needed for achieving such success, ranging from ligand development, bench-to-bedside issues, bioinformatics solutions, and neuroimaging equipment improvements. Throughout the meeting, the importance of data sharing was frequently raised. It was agreed that scientists using neuroimaging techniques to study drug abuse must use a trans-disciplinary approach to bring disparate disciplines together for collaborative experiments leading to the better

understanding of how addiction transpires in the brain. Large sample sizes are necessary for studies of complex diseases, such as drug addiction, for appropriate genetic and phenotypic inferences. A working group format was suggested during this meeting and is discussed in the Demand Reduction future plans section of the Blueprint Update.

Manufacturers of medical diagnostic equipment are beginning to show interest in producing the more expensive, higher resolution equipment needed for research studies. While the motivation for industry to begin investing in these machines may be for more glamorous areas such as Alzheimer's research, the same regions of the brain are believed to be responsible for craving and addictive behavior.

International Drug Profiling Conference Series

From the scientific literature, there is evidence that forensic “drug profiling” is conducted in laboratories around the world. No previous attempts, however, have been made to convene a conference to discuss the different goals and methodologies available internationally. In conjunction with DEA, CTAC supported the first international drug profiling conference in December 2002 at the DEA forensics laboratory in Virginia. Representatives from the United States, Germany,

Australia, United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Hong Kong, United Nations, and the Netherlands attended the conference. The outcome of the conference series was to identify samples that share a commonality of source and drug-processing methodologies that distinguish specific controlled substances and the geographic area where the production is taking place. With the recognition that drug trafficking is international in scope, this series of conferences will have as its focal point the goal of providing both intelligence and enforcement information to law enforcement worldwide.

International Crop Estimation and Control Methods Workshop

ONDCP, together with the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime (UN/ODC), is cosponsoring a two-day international workshop focusing on illegal drug crop control measures. The meeting will be held in Vienna, Austria in early 2003. The workshop will address technical challenges to the drug abuse research community. Topics include eradication alternative results, issues/impediments and opportunities, cost and price measurements of illegal narcotics products, best practices and alternatives for measuring prices, and local economic alternatives to drug crops.