

Conference briefings

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco: making the science and policy connections*

ILANA B. GLASS, Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant,
Institute of Psychiatry, Addiction Research Unit, National Addiction Centre,
4 Windsor Walk, London SE5 8AF

This conference was organised by Professor Griffith Edwards and the opening address was given by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. It coincided with the official opening of the National Addiction Centre (NAC) on the campus of the Institute of Psychiatry at 4 Windsor Walk.

The conference, attended by luminaries in the addiction field who came from the USA, Canada, UK, Eastern and Western Europe, Africa and Australia, spanned four days, and was a mixture of keynote addresses, panel discussions and lectures. The emphasis was on debate.

The Princess Royal touched upon many of the important issues which were to be discussed. She stressed that the NAC would provide a unique resource which combined an effective array of research, training and clinical work, but that it had a role far and beyond, by being part of a national and international network. This occasion was seen as a fitting one to explore how science could serve policy, and vice versa.

Speakers covered many controversial topics: identification of commonalities in different countries, the optimal conditions for making science happen, prevention in different substance fields, the response of science to changing policy demands, science and treatment policy, and the legalisation debate.

*Conference held from 16–19 July 1991 at the Institute of Psychiatry, London.

Thus, the conference galvanised a range of perspectives. It became clear that the needs and values of scientists and policy makers differed even perhaps to the extent of being polarised. The recognition that the policy maker required simple, rapid, low cost results catalysed the scientist into thinking about mechanisms for delivery of research findings which could be easily understood and translated into the policy-maker's agenda.

The complexity of the interactive process between science and policy was continuously evident, especially since science is only one part of policy, which can, moreover, be influenced by value judgements and political expediency. It was emphasised that, of course, the influence of science is not only through governmental agencies. This led to a debate on the role of scientists as citizens, and where the scientist's moral and ethical responsibility lies. There were no simple answers.

The meeting crystallised the foundation for in depth appreciation that science policy studies are a worthwhile area for analysis. That this relationship, and hence a feasible system for implementation, is at an early stage of development was further stressed by the following quote from the *Talmud* in Jerome Jaffe's summary: "The day is short, the task is difficult, it is impossible to complete, but we are forbidden not to try".

The Sixth Annual TAPS Conference*

FRANK HOLLOWAY, Consultant Psychiatrist, St Giles Day Hospital, London SE5 7RN

It is very much to the credit of policy-makers and funding bodies that the importance of evaluating the

process and outcome of the hospital closure programmes that got underway in Britain during the 1980s was recognised and that research studies were instituted. In a series of conferences the Team for the Assessment of Psychiatric Service (TAPS) has

*Held on 4 July 1991 at the Robin Brook Medical Centre, St Bartholomew's Medical College, London.