Introduction

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International classification and diagnosis deal with concepts central to health and health care in a global manner, an approach increasingly compelling in the interdependent world in which we live. The World Health Organization (WHO), the prominent international agency in the field, assumed since its establishment in 1948 the responsibility to issue periodic revisions of the *International Classification of Diseases*, continuing this way an uninterrupted process initiated a hundred years ago by the International Statistical Institute. The World Psychiatric Association (WPA), the foremost international professional organization in the field of psychiatry and mental health, has maintained for many years formal collaborative relations with WHO. An important topic of collaboration has been the *International Classification of Diseases*, to the development and implementation of which WPA has contributed the perspectives of its vast array of national member societies and the scientific cooperation of its Section on Classification, Diagnostic Assessment and Nomenclature. To put in perspective current and prospective developments in international classification and diagnosis, it may be useful to consider the following background notes. The first set pertains to WHO as follows:

- It has produced several revisions of the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)* since 1948, the latest being ICD-10, published in 1992 and 1993 [1, 2].

- It published the first edition of the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICDH)* [3] in 1982 and then completed a second edition as *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)* [4] in 2001.
- WHO's ICD-10 Mental Health Reference and Training Centers have participated in various aspects of training and dissemination of this classification system.
- The WHO Committee on Evaluating and Updating the ICD-10 Mental Health Component has conducted an *International Survey on the Use of ICD-10 and Related Diagnostic Systems* [5].
- An epidemiologic consortium has been established to conduct community studies as World Mental Health Surveys [6], using various ICD-10-related instruments.

The following list highlights WPA contributions to the field:

- It participated actively in the development of ICD-10, particularly through its Section on Classification, Diagnostic Assessment and Nomenclature.
- It has collaborated with national and regional psychiatric associations for the development of adaptations and annotations of ICD-10 as follows:
 - With the American Psychiatric Association (APA) for DSM-III [7] and DSM-IV [8].

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Fig. 1. Participants in the Symposium on International Classification and Diagnosis organized by the WPA and WHO Classification Components and held at the WPA European Regional Meeting in London, July 12 and 13, 2001.

- With the Chinese Society of Psychiatrists, for the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders*, ed 2, revised (CCMD-2R) [9] and ed 3 (CCMD-3) [10].
- With the Japanese National Institute of Mental Health, for the Japanese Clinical Modification of ICD-10 [11].
- With the Cuban Psychiatric Society for the development of the *Third Cuban Glossary of Psychiatry (GC-3)* [12].
- With the Latin American Psychiatric Association (APAL) for the *Latin American Guide for Psychiatric Diagnosis (GLADP)* [13].
- With several member societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe concerning local diagnostic developments and practice.
- It has recently completed the development of the *WPA International Guidelines for Diagnostic Assessment (IGDA)* [14].

Early in 2001, the WHO and WPA components concerned with classification and diagnosis identified the need to organize a symposium for a broad and balanced discussion of the current status and prospects for international classification in psychiatry. The Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP) then offered to host a 2-day Symposium on International Classification and Diagnosis within the framework of a WPA European Congress in London in July 2001. The Symposium organizers were Prof. J. E. Mezzich (WPA), Dr. T. Bedirhan Üstün (WHO), and Prof. J. L. Cox (RCP). Collaboration and support was offered by several member societies of WPA active in classification work, including the APA, the Chinese Society of Psychiatry (CSP), the Cuban Psychiatric Society, the French Federation of Psychiatry (FFP), the Japanese

Society of Psychiatry and Neurology (JSPN) and the APAL. Complementarily, the US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) supported the Symposium scientifically and financially.

The Symposium objectives included the following:

- To evaluate international experience with ICD-10 and other current diagnostic systems.
- To explore a framework for universal standards and attention to local realities and needs.
- To elucidate research lines for the construction of future diagnostic systems.

The first day of the Symposium started with brief institutional statements from the leaders of WPA (Profs. J. J. López-Ibor and J. E. Mezzich), WHO (Drs. B. Saraceno and T. Bedirhan Üstün), RCP (Prof. J. L. Cox), APA (Prof. A. Tasman), CSP (Prof. Y. F. Chen), FFP (Prof. S. D. Kipman), JSPN (Prof. Y. Nakane), APAL (Prof. M. R. Jorge), and the US NIMH (Dr. S. Hyman). A group photograph of the Symposium participants at the opening is appended. The scientific sessions that followed involved a critical review of experience obtained with ICD-10, DSM-IV and other current diagnostic systems, in general and for specific areas of psychopathology. The second Symposium day examined promising future directions in international classification and diagnosis, including conceptual bases, emerging national and regional systems connected to ICD-10, and a discussion of future steps.

The Symposium was widely perceived by its participants and audience as highly successful. Reflecting this, *Psychopathology*, the official journal of the WPA Sections on Clinical Psychopathology and on Classification, Diagnostic Assessment and Nomenclature, offered to publish the scientific papers originating from the Symposium in a

special double issue. The resulting volume has the following structure:

- General Perspectives
- Topical Review of Experience with Current Diagnostic Systems
- Conceptual Bases for the Development of Future Diagnostic Systems
- Evolving Adaptations and Annotations of the International Classification

- Commentaries on Integrative Approaches and Future Steps
- Epilogue

Details on specific topics and authors are displayed in the table of contents. Readers are invited to analyze and enjoy the information and ideas presented and to offer comments contributory to an emerging effort towards a more integrated international system of classification and diagnosis.

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