



In the first call for the European Prize for Best Practice in Prison Health, created by the Regional Office for Europe of WHO

## Three Spanish projects in the area of prison health were awarded prizes by the World Health Organisation

- The purpose of the Prize is the identification, recognition and dissemination of the best programmes and policies in the field of health promotion and disease prevention in the penitentiary institutions of the Member States
- The prize-winning projects constitute reference strategies in the following fields: improvement in the care of HIV and HCV patients, reduction of harm and risk of infection and health promotion by means of environmental education
- Together with Spain's projects, referring to the penitentiaries of Fontcalent (Alicante, Community of Valencia), Pamplona (Navarre) and El Dueso (Santoña, Cantabria), the projects submitted by institutions in Belgium, Holland, United Kingdom and Romania also received awards

**28 February 2006.** This morning the Director General of Penitentiary Institutions, Mercedes Gallizo, the Government Delegate for the National Drug Plan, Carmen Moya, the Director General of Public Health, Manuel Oñorbe, and the Secretary of the National Plan on AIDS, Lourdes Chamorro, presented the European Prizes for Best Practice in Prison Health to the penitentiaries of Fontcalent (Alicante), Pamplona (Navarre) and El Dueso (Santoña, Cantabria).

Awarded by the World Health Organisation, the objective of these prizes is the identification, recognition and dissemination of the best programmes and policies in the area of health promotion and disease prevention in the penitentiary institutions of the Member States. The three prize-winning

Spanish projects constitute reference strategies in their respective fields in the area of prison health.

In 1995, the WHO initiated the Health in Prisons Project (HIPP) in order to promote health in the prison community, in line with the spirit of the Ottawa Charter. Since that time, this project has been giving impetus to an exchange of information and health best practice, the drawing-up of recommendations and the dissemination of the experience gained over the years. Along these lines, a biannual European prize was created in order to highlight best health practices in prisons, within the scope of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

## **CATEGORIES AND PROJECTS AWARDED PRIZES**

The Prize includes three categories, to each of which countries can present a single candidature. The Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, coordinator in our country of this call for submissions in collaboration with the Sub-Directorate General of Penitentiary Health and the Spanish Penitentiary Health Magazine, received 11 projects from Spain's 77 penitentiary institutions. A pre-selection was made among these projects, and a decision was reached to participate in the call for submissions with the three candidatures which, in the end, were awarded prizes.

In the evaluation of the projects, the following aspects were assessed: the significance of the health problem to which the project refers, the proper planning and implementation of the project, the evidence of the results and the evaluation process, as well as the project's usefulness with respect to its application in other countries belonging to the WHO Health in Prisons Project (HIPP). Together with the Spanish projects, in this first edition of the Prize, successful projects were submitted by Belgium, Holland, the United Kingdom and Romania, countries which have also received three awards.

Spain's prize-winning projects are as follows:

**Category 1:** Example de best practice with respect to the health services offered to prisoners.

- Prize-winning project: «Protocols of Coordination between Prison Health Services and Reference Hospitals. HIV and HCV Infection», submitted by the Fontcalent penitentiary (Alicante).

**Category 2:** Example of best practice relating to one or more of the following services offered to prisoners: prevention, health education and health promotion.

- Prize-winning project: «7 years of the Syringe Exchange Programme in the Pamplona Prison», submitted by the Pamplona penitentiary (Navarre).

**Category 3:** Example of best practice demonstrating the effective collaboration between the prison and the outside community in the health improvement area.

- Winning project: «Promotion of Health and Environmental Education in the Natural Environment of the El Dueso Penitentiary» submitted by the El Dueso penitentiary (Santoña, Cantabria).

### **1.- FONTCALENT PENITENTIARY (ALICANTE): IMPROVING THE CARE GIVEN TO PRISONERS INFECTED BY HIV AND HCV**

The project of the Fontcalent penitentiary (Alicante) is aimed at improving the care provided to prisoners infected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the hepatitis C virus (HCV) by means of the development of protocols of coordination between the prison's health services and the reference hospitals. With these protocols, developed through a consensus between the hospital specialists and the prison's medical team, a twofold course of action is sought with respect to two fundamental aspects: the commencement of treatment and the control thereof, if necessary, and the monitoring of patients.

In Spanish prisons, the prevalence of HIV has been historically very high, linked to the significant number of prisoners with a record of intravenous drug use in the prison population. In 2005, 10% of the prison population had HIV. With respect to prison patients infected by HCV, the percentage is estimated to be as high as 33%. Moreover, a high percentage (over 90%) of the HIV patients are co-infected by HCV, which, among other things, signifies an impairment to the benefits to be derived from therapeutic treatment.

The implementation of the coordination protocols at Fontcalent prison has contributed significantly to improving the care provided to HIV and/or HCV patients in several aspects:

- Increase in the number of patients who undergo preliminary tests (liver biopsy, primarily) and who submit to treatment.
- Improvement in the communication, interrelation and cooperation with the relevant hospital service.
- Furthering of publications and research in this environment.

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- Greater efficiency and reduction of costs by reducing the number of transfers and the number of repeated tests.

Given that the prison population affected by these infections presents similar characteristics throughout Spain, the project, backed by the Spanish Society for Penitentiary Health, has served as a model for subsequent implementation in other prisons in the country.

## **2.- PAMPLONA PENITENTIARY: SYRINGE EXCHANGE IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION**

The project submitted by the Pamplona penitentiary (Navarre) consists of assessing the impact in the prison of the syringe exchange programme (PIJ), following seven years of operation. This programme is aimed at intravenous drug users, who represent 35% of the prison's population.

Briefly, the PIJ offers IV drug users the chance to exchange syringes in a personalised manner and includes the possibility of healthcare interventions, if necessary.

The assessment of the programme has made it possible to confirm that no remarkable incidents have occurred, either with respect to the users or to the prison staff, in the course of the seven years in which the programme has been in place. Moreover, the evaluation arrived at the following conclusions:

- The effectiveness of the programme was demonstrated with respect to the prevention of infections transmitted in the blood by injection drug users.
- The PIJ has not brought about an increase in drug use, it has eradicated the use of illegal syringes, has avoided the inadequate disposal of syringes and has not encouraged the use of injection drugs.
- Furthermore, the programme has facilitated the derivation of IV drug users to other treatment programmes.

In addition, not a single case of seroconversion with respect to HIV and HCV has been documented during this period. The ongoing monitoring of the programme, as well as the opinion of users and prison staff members alike, are considered to be the key factors of its success.

### 3.- EL DUESO PENITENTIARY: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING A HEALTHY LIFE

The project submitted by the El Dueso penitentiary is aimed at awakening the interest of prisoners and to create an awareness of environmental care and its incidence on health. In this case, the programme has taken advantage of the privileged surroundings of the prison as an instrument of education in the adoption of healthier living habits.

The project is divided into two complementary lines of action:

- The NACAR programme (Nature and Prison Programme), designed for the environmental education of prisoners. With the support of SEO/BirdLife, of the Nature Preserve of the Marshes of Santoña and Noja (RNMSN) and of the prison staff, the prisoners are able to learn about and to respect nature by means of bird walks, educational workshops, environmental meetings, conferences and a range of initiatives associated with their natural environment.
- The «Domino Effect» programme, aimed at modifying the health habits of prisoners. The programme operates through a group of health agents. These agents, selected and trained from among the prisoners themselves, take care of transmitting healthy habits to the other prisoners by means of educational workshops, the preparation and dissemination of articles and news, as well as formulas of interaction with nature, beneficial to health.

The positive results of the implementation of the project include the active cooperation of the prisoners in scientific studies, their contribution to programmes and actions for the restocking of all kinds of species, an increase in environmental awareness, a greater involvement in the tasks of caring for the natural environment and a gradual change in their habits moving towards a healthier lifestyle.

From left to right: Jaime Hernández, Warden, Fontcalent penitentiary (Alicante, Community of Valencia); Pablo Saiz de la Hoya, prison physician; Carmen Moya, Government Delegate for the National Drug Plan; Mercedes Gallizo, Director General of Penitentiary Institutions, and Manuel Oñorbe, Director General of Public Health.

From left to right: Antonio García, Warden, Pamplona penitentiary (Navarre); Carmen Moya, Government Delegate for the National Drug Plan, and Mercedes Gallizo, Director General of Penitentiary Institutions.

Carlos Fonfría, Warden, El Dueso penitentiary (Santoña, Cantabria), receives the prize from Mercedes Gallizo, Director General of Penitentiary Institutions.

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