



Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing®

UNITED NATIONS ACTIVITY REPORT

The purpose of “Youth Voices on Substance Abuse: A Guide for Empowerment and Action” was to introduce various experts who are working toward a better world with informed populations regarding substance abuse in association with Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organizations Executive Committee. The meeting also had several student presentations from various high schools in New York in a variety of media including poems, videos, and research projects.

Organized by the Non-Governmental Organizations Relations, Advocacy and Special Events Section, Outreach Division, [Department of Public Information](#) (DPI) in collaboration with the Department of Public Information associated non-governmental organization, [Global Education Motivators](#).

The forum was held 20 April, 2017, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, NY, United States.

Report submitted by Marnie Colborne, STTI United Nations Youth Representative

Substance abuse is a widespread global issue affecting many populations, directly aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-Being. Children are using and being harmed by substances now more than ever, and nurses have a special role in education and advocacy in this area to decrease the harm being caused. We all have a role in being a responsible global citizen, but how do we develop the skills in our youth population when it takes extended resources and time outside of the curriculum to do so?

Harm Reduction Principles, in combination with education that is free of fear, are tactics that have been previously employed in both Canada and America and are essential to inform the public of true facts to make their own informed decisions. The youth were clear in their presentations that education being received is being ignored, especially when true facts about risks and anticipated drug side effects are delivered in a “light way,” or, in contrast, if fear was used rather than fact. For example, once children are taught that marijuana and cocaine are “bad,” many youth are likely to experiment with marijuana during adolescence anyway and realize that if marijuana was seemingly harmless, then their likeliness to try cocaine was increased.

Some of the recommendations from youth were to discuss cultural differences in drug use, educating from fact rather than opinion, giving real descriptions of the high experience, having a safe discussion between teachers and students about drug experiences, and infusing drug education throughout the curriculum in the hopes that this will decrease the stigma associated. It was also brought up that rehabilitation clinics should not discount any individual’s admission regardless of relapse count.

As mentioned, drug and substance abuse seriously affects the populations in our care both in community and in hospital. Educational material regarding communication strategies with patients can

be helpful to eradicate the taboo and stigma that keeps drug addiction quiet. Keeping up-to-date on harm reduction strategies is important for nurses.

To view the forum, go to <http://webtv.un.org/watch/youth-voices-on-substance-abuse-a-guide-for-empowerment-and-action/5405032562001>