

IDRAC

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND APPLIED CARE

BEIRUT - LEBANON

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I. ABOUT IDRAC

IDRAC (Institute for Development Research and Applied Care) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that was officially founded by Lebanese experts in the field of mental health (psychiatrists and psychologists) in 1995. These experts had been conducting research and delivering services in Lebanon since 1980. At that time, the founding members of IDRAC were faced with a grim reality: there was no data on mental health disorders in Lebanon, nor any available assessment tools to assess the prevalence of these disorders (on a large scale). Above all, the Lebanese wars had been ravaging the country for five years and there was little knowledge about their effect on the mental health of the population.

IDRAC's main mission is to promote research in mental health, to increase public awareness (through seminars, conferences, pamphlets...), to participate in the improvement of training and educational programs in mental health, and to disseminate knowledge to the Lebanese and the Arab speaking public at large. In an effort to fulfill its mission, IDRAC's members have been involved in many national and international studies, targeting different segments of the population (children, orphans, university students, patients, general community...) and assessing different types of mental health conditions, (including depression, anxiety disorders, suicidality, substance use, ADHD, etc). IDRAC relies mainly on the benevolent support of institutions and individuals who believe in the necessity of scientific research in mental health and the public education in that field.

IDRAC has a sister institution, M.I.N.D. (Medical Institute for Neuropsychological Disorders), that is mainly focused on providing clinical services to the public. The majority of the psychiatrists and psychologists working at M.I.N.D. are also actively involved in the research conducted at IDRAC.

Please browse our research section to see some of our national and international studies on such topics of interest as war, substance abuse, child mental health, women's health, and depression.

II. COMMUNITY STUDIES

A. Adult Studies

1. Lebanon Substance Use Universities Monitoring Study (1991-1999)

A substance use university monitoring study was initiated by IDRAC in 1991, and was conducted in two waves (Phase I: 1991 and Phase II: 1999) in order to examine the patterns, trends, and possible risk factors of substance use among university

students in Lebanon. A random sample of 25% of the student population (approximately 2000 students) of two major private universities was selected. Data was collected using a self-administered instrument based on the Diagnostic Interview Schedule, version III in Phase I and version IV in Phase II. Several substance use indicators were assessed, namely: ever use, more than five times use, daily use, abuse and dependence (based on DSM-III criteria in Phase I and DSM-IV criteria in Phase II). The study surveyed the pattern of use of several licit and illicit substances (alcohol, nicotine, tranquilizers, barbiturates, morphine, stimulants, codeine, cannabis, cocaine, and heroin), as well as a number of personal, social, and environmental risk factors. The results of Phase I have been published and those of Phase II are the subject of several coming publications.

2. Five-Year Follow-Up Study

A prospective study was conducted during three phases (1989, 1991, 1994), in four different Lebanese communities that were deliberately selected to represent increasing degrees of exposure to the Lebanon Wars. The study included adults aged 18-65 years, who had lived for the preceding two years in the community in question. The sample size was 658 subjects in Phase I, 234 subjects in phase II and 208 subjects in phase III. The instruments used were the Arabic Diagnostic Interview Schedule (DIS) in phases I and II and the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI) in phase III. The War Events Questionnaire was also used to quantify war exposure. The instruments used covered the assessment of a number of disorders including Depression, Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Dependence, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and different other disorders.

B. Children and Adolescent Studies

1. Children and War

This project was initiated in 1996, while the "Grapes of Wrath" Israeli operation was taking place. Several programs were launched then to support the displaced families and help those who stayed in the bombarded areas. One of these programs was the one initiated by I.D.R.A.C, which aimed at assessing the mental health and relieving the distress of the traumatized children.

This program consisted of three main components:

The first component focused on assessing the mental health status of 386 students (6-17 years) directly after the military operation (Phase I -1996) who represent 45,000 students. A group of them (143 out of 386) were followed one year later (Phase II-1997) to measure the persistence of mental health disorders.

The second component was a school-based group treatment of 2500 students of the most affected villages. A group of 116 students representing the 2500 in Phase I (1996) to assess their mental health situation before the treatment was delivered. Those were followed one year later (Phase II-1997) after the treatment to measure its effectiveness.

Finally, the third component consisted of war orphans who lost one or two parents during the bombarding of a U.N shelter at Qana, one of the villages in South Lebanon. These children are being followed yearly in a "Child Care Program" that assesses their psychological, medical, and social needs.

III. PATIENT STUDIES

A. Clinical Medication Trials

In 2000, IDRAC was asked to participate in two international multi-center studies by a drug company to investigate the safety and efficacy of a medication in two populations: Patients with Bipolar Disorder who are currently depressed, and patients with Alzheimer's Dementia who have psychotic features (delusions or hallucinations). The studies use a double blind placebo controlled methodology with either open label (Bipolar study) or double blind (Alzheimer study) extension phases for responders.

B. Other Clinical Studies

In addition to the epidemiologic studies that IDRAC has conducted, clinical trials, case histories and inpatient studies constituted an important part of IDRAC's research. In one of the clinical studies we were able to prove that Midazolam is a better anxiolytic drug compared to Droperidol and Promethazine among pre-selected patients undergoing surgery. Moreover, our group had the chance to observe in depth mixed affective illness following brain injury, and the issue of "Demonic Possession" and multiple personality disorder through studying carefully some of their cases. The relationship between depression and pregnancy was also examined by studying 150 females admitted consecutively during the month of May and April 1987 at the Saint Georges Hospital. Finally, a preliminary study about the profile of ADHD in Lebanon was conducted.

C. Comorbidity Of Substance Abuse And Other Psychiatric Disorders: An Inpatient Study From Lebanon

A study was conducted in 1994 on all patients with present and/or past substance abuse or dependence, who were admitted to the inpatient psychiatry unit at St. George Hospital (Beirut, Lebanon) between 1979-1992. The medical charts of 222 patients were reviewed and the comorbidity of substance abuse with other psychiatric disorders was assessed.

IV. ADAPTATION AND VALIDATION STUDIES

Throughout its research history, IDRAC members have adapted many instruments to Lebanese-Arabic language, ranging from self administered, semi-structured to structured interviews. These include the Diagnostic Interview Schedule, and the Composite International Diagnostic Interview, the most common used structured interviews in the mental health field.

Moreover, the prolonged war experience in Lebanon made it necessary to design an instrument that measures exposure to Lebanon war events in order to study its relation to mental health disorders. Thus, the War Events Questionnaire was designed by our group to assess both the objective and the

subjective war experiences among the Lebanese.

V. ISSUES AND REVIEWS IN PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH

Diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders have gained the attention of mental health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, epidemiologists...) for many years. Several important yardsticks have been designed including Feigner Criteria, Research Diagnostic Criteria, and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual criteria. Several treatment theories have also been forwarded such as cognitive behavioral strategies, debriefing, and stress inoculation training. Moreover, the availability and accessibility of mental health resources (professionals, facilities, training...) have always been a concern and an important research topic for many decades. As part of their research work, IDRAC members have explored the existing diagnostic criteria, treatment of mental health disorders and the availability of services in the Arab world through field trials, clinical observations and review of literature.

VI. IDRAC'S Training And Education Programs

IDRAC provides an opportunity for clinical and research mental health training in the following specialties:

- 1- Medicine: medical students, interns, residents.
- 2- Psychology: graduates with a bachelor's, master's, doctoral and postdoctoral degree
- 3- Nursing: undergraduate and postgraduate
- 4- Research: biostatisticians and epidemiologists
- 5- Teachers and educators
- 6- Other allied health professionals: pharmacists, social workers,.

The training varies with the level of education and special interests of the candidate, keeping in mind the applicant's needs and time availability.

1. The Team And Work Organization:

Clinical teaching is offered by members of M.I.N.D and IDRAC who typically work in a work multidisciplinary team setting. Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Psychiatric Nurses interact daily on most inpatients and the many outpatients. Trainees are grouped by their background: Medical personnel (interns and residents) psychology (BA, MA and PhD) and nursing students work together in teams. Students from other specialties, when rotating, also do so within a team approach.

Research at IDRAC is also multidisciplinary and is conducted within a teamwork spirit. The group of researchers includes psychiatrists, psychologists, biostatisticians, educators, social workers and lay members trained in structured diagnostic interviewing.

2. The Setting:

The clinical training is provided by IDRAC in association with the Medical Institute for Neuropsychological Disorders (M.I.N.D.) and the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology at St. George Hospital and Balamand University Medical School. The setting consists of a psychiatric inpatient unit, outpatient clinics and emergency room services. It also includes consultation liaison services with other specialties such as neurology, internal medicine, cardiology, pediatrics, as well as extramural programs (home, schools, and special centers...). The acute psychiatric inpatient unit is located on a special floor of a general hospital (St

George Hospital, Beirut). Lebanon. The Psychiatry and Psychology outpatient services are provided by MIND's eight outpatient clinics, four of which are located in the Ashrafieh area, and the other four in Ras-Beirut area: all of the clinics are in Beirut-Lebanon. Specialized services are offered in the field of child, adolescent, adult and geriatric psychiatry and psychology.

The research training is based at IDRAC's offices located at St. George Hospital, Ashrafieh, Beirut. The offices provide trainees with computer services, an electronic library and a print library. The fieldwork in research takes place in various geographical areas of Lebanon, depending on the need of the ongoing projects.

3. The Programs:

A- Clinical Training:

IDRAC has trained medical students (interns and residents), psychology students (BA, MA, PhD), and nursing students from several universities in Lebanon. IDRAC's training of Medical Students, interns, and residents follows the well recognized structured training offered at other well established academic centers: rounds, seminars, journal clubs, assigned readings, research papers, etc...training of Medical students, interns and residents is conducted in conjunction with the Balamand University Medical School and St. George Hospital University Medical Center.

IDRAC's clinical training program in Psychology is organized into three independent modules for the convenience of the students. The training is as follows:

- 1- Clinical evaluation and case-conceptualization based on international classifications of psychiatric and psychological disorders
- 2- Psychological testing and cognitive evaluation
- 3- Treatment, including pharmaco-therapy and/or psychotherapy.

Each of these modules (Clinical Evaluation, Psychological Testing, Treatment) includes the following:

Didactic sessions:

These include a series of seminars, educational audio-visual sessions, lectures, group-meetings, journal clubs, conferences and grand-rounds. These sessions cover topics that are of major importance for the three above-mentioned modules, such as general psychopathology, psychiatric epidemiology, and case studies, review of the psychiatry and psychology literature, and critical discussions on specific clinical cases or specific findings.

Training on instruments:

Depending on the module, this may include administration and interpretation of cognitive tests (IQ batteries, computer tests...), clinical scales for evaluating the progress of a variety of specific disorders (Hamilton scales, Beck Depression and Anxiety scales, Y-BOCS, PANSS, Barkley scales...) or comprehensive structured research interviews (DIS, CIDI, DICA-R...). The aforementioned instruments (clinical scales and structured research interviews) have been adapted by IDRAC into Arabic (see assessment tools). IDRAC is also a training center in the Middle East region for the CIDI (WHO, Geneva). For more information concerning details of the training, contact us.

Supervised observation and clinical practice:

Supervised observation and clinical practice of the trainees is ensured through regular group-meetings and group-discussions, through direct observation of the trainee's work by a senior clinician, and through written feedback and comments provided by their training coordinator regarding the reports and other written work that is required from them on a regular basis. These obviously may vary from a module to another, and frequently include one-to-one supervision (Testing, Psychotherapy...). The clinical work spans over several areas: acute inpatient psychiatric care, outpatient psychiatric care, emergency room, consultation liaison, psychological testing, family assessment, couples therapy, individual cognitive-behavioral therapy and applied play therapy for children. Psychological testing includes using comprehensive cognitive and psycho-educational batteries, as well as clinical scales and other computerized instruments.

B- Research Training:

Training in research and survey methods is provided to physicians, psychologists, and public health professionals at an undergraduate and postgraduate level on epidemiology and biostatistics, clinical studies, treatment trials, population studies...). This training has attracted individuals from Lebanon, neighboring countries as well as individuals from Europe and the U.S.A. The training program is adapted to the individual's need and level of expertise, and accordingly is assigned to ongoing projects and is given responsibilities progressively in order to help them ultimately become principal investigators in a specific area. The latter can include training in the use of instruments (including structured interviews and biostatistical software), participation in data collection, literature reviews, data analysis, and article writing. All the work is done in an atmosphere of strict academic requirements and trainees are expected to participate actively in journal clubs and research seminars including critical reappraisal of ongoing or published research of IDRAC.

C- Specialized Training: Teachers And Educators:

In 1996, IDRAC initiated a school based psychological treatment program in the south of Lebanon and west Bekaa. The goal of the treatment was to alleviate the impact of an extremely traumatic war situation (Grapes of Wrath) on children and adolescents. Sixty-eight teachers were trained for that purpose, 2500 children were actively treated.

IDRAC also offers specialized training for professionals (individually or in groups) who are expected, directly or indirectly, to deal with mental health issues.

4. Accreditation Of The Training By IDRAC:

Official Certificates are provided by IDRAC upon completion of the training module. The duration of the training varies from one student to another and from one module to another.

5. Application Procedure:

The application file must include the following documents:

A statement of goals (purpose).

A resume (curriculum vitae).

A copy of transcripts (undergraduate and graduate).

Two letters of recommendation from a university tutor or head of program.

A personal interview with the applicant in addition to a review of his/her application file is also required.

VII. MIND : Medical Institute for Neuropsychological Disorders

IDRAC has a sister institution, the Medical Institute for Neuropsychological Disorders (MIND) which is staffed by Psychiatrists and Psychologists who are dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in patient care. They are specialized in helping children, adolescents, adults and the elderly, by accurately testing for and diagnosing such frequently encountered problems as Depression, Anxiety, Panic Attacks, Substance Use, Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity, Learning Disorders and Dementia, and less common disorders like Schizophrenia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Somatization, and Autism. Treatment is delivered in an outpatient setting with access to a state of the art inpatient neuropsychiatric unit in a general hospital when needed. Expert services are provided in true multi-disciplinary fashion utilizing highly regarded international standards where patients' and families' well-being comes first.

Cordahi, Caroline:

Child and Adolescent Psychologist; DEA Psychology from St. Joseph University, Beirut (1999) Studied Child Psychology at Yale, Columbia, and the California School of Professional Psychology, USA; services include evaluation and psychotherapy for children and adolescents, as well as psychological testing for all ages (intelligence, specific cognitive abilities: attention, (auditory and visual) memory and other mental processes).

Farah, Lynne: Social worker / Psychiatric Assistant.

Fayyad, John: Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist: Received his MD from the American University of Beirut in 1985. Trained in psychiatry and child and adolescent psychiatry at the Ohio State University (USA). Also a diplomate and examiner for the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (1992); services include evaluation and treatment of all childhood and adolescent psychiatric disorders including ADHD, Behavioral Disorders, Depression, Anxiety Disorders, Developmental Disorders and Tic Disorders.

Karam, Elie: Medical Doctor, received his degree in 1974 from the American University of Beirut (Lebanon), and did his training in psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis USA. Received the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology 1979 (USA). Awarded the Fulbright Scholar in 1990. Head of Psychiatry and Psychology Department – Saint George Hospital.

Nacouzi, Marie-Therese: Psychiatric nurse / Psychiatric Assistant.

Nasser-Karam, Aimee: Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist; Ph.D. from St. Joseph University, Beirut (2001); trained at the Beck Center for Cognitive Therapy, Philadelphia USA; services include evaluation and psychotherapy for adults (mood, anxiety, eating and substance abuse disorders).

Siriani, Nathalie: Clinical psychologist / Psychiatric Assistant .

Tanios, Christine: Psychologist / Psychiatric Assistant.

VIII. The L.E.B.A.N.O.N. Study (Lebanese Evaluation of the Burden of Ailments and Needs Of the Nation)

WMH Surveys

The L.E.B.A.N.O.N. Study is part of a cross-national project initiated by WHO (Geneva) and Harvard Medical School called

the WMH Survey Initiative. This project was initiated in an effort to address the global burden of mental health disorders and generate figures based on national epidemiologic surveys across the world. Accurate information on the prevalence of mental health disorders, their risk factors, treatment patterns and barriers to service use will be generated.

The WMH Consortium is comprised of nationally or regionally representative surveys in 26 countries, representing all regions of the world. Lebanon is the only Arab-speaking country participating in this consortium so far. For detailed information about the WMH initiative and the participating countries, please click here.

- Methods

In 2000, our group at IDRAC decided to embark on this cross-national initiative and conduct the first national survey in the region, which studies extensively mental health disorders and other medical chronic illnesses. The L.E.B.A.N.O.N. national Study was based on a multistage household probability sample design without replacement. Households were selected from the five different Mohafazat representing the various demographic and socioeconomic levels in the country. Two thousand eight hundred fifty seven (2857) face-to-face interviews were conducted by lay interviewers who were intensively trained by two certified trainers at IDRAC. Fourteen training sessions were conducted all over Lebanon to train the team of 350 fieldworkers. Data collection was strictly supervised at multiple levels with direct field back-check reaching up to 47% of the cases. Field quality control techniques included: field accompaniment, face-face visits and telephone back-check. Moreover, 100% of the completed interviews were fully edited with a re-editing rate of 20%. Data was entered using different softwares and extensive cleaning checks were implemented by both the Harvard Coordinating Center and IDRAC's team.

- Research Instrument

The L.E.B.A.N.O.N. Study used the WMH-CIDI (Composite International Diagnostic Interview), a fully structured diagnostic interview, to assess disorders and treatment. The WMH-CIDI was adapted to Arabic following a rigorous translation protocol. The WMH-CIDI assesses disorders based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) and the ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders (ICD-10).

The wide spectrum of disorders and diseases assessed include:

Anxiety Disorders: Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Specific Phobia, Social Phobia, Agoraphobia, Panic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, etc...

Mood Disorders: Major Depressive Disorder, Dysthymia and Bipolar Disorders)

Substance Use Disorders: Alcohol, Illicit and licit drugs

Other mental health disorders: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct Disorder, etc...

Other chronic medical conditions: Heart Problems, High Blood Pressure, Diabetes, Cancer, etc...

Moreover, extensive information covering service utilization (consultations, hospitalization,...) and medication intake, economic status (income, employment,...), social network, marital life, childhood experiences, war exposure, religious commitment, etc.... have been collected.

Couples Sub-sample

A sub-sample of couples was selected to participate in an extensive evaluation of marital experiences including: disagreement due to handling family finances, matters of recreation, friends, philosophy of life, making major decisions etc..., involvement in decision making, exposure to domestic violence, etc...

WMH Workgroups

Each year all international collaborators in the WMH consortium meet to discuss issues related to analysis and article writing. In this context, work groups with members from different countries have been created to discuss issues related specifically to drug abuse, suicide, ADHD, assortative mating, gender differences methodological aspects, government reports, and childhood adversities, with the latter being chaired by the Lebanese principal investigator.

Funding

The LE.B.A.N.O.N-WMH survey is being mainly funded by IDRAC with partial support from the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and other international and regional institutions.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENT SECTIONS HIGHLIGHTED ABOVE WILL BE POSTED SOON

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The World Mental Health Composite International Diagnostic Interview



<http://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/wmhcdi/>

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