



## Communications of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

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### Child and adolescent psychiatry in Turkey and the Turkish Association for CAP

Füsün Çuhadaroğlu Çetin

The Turkish Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) was established in 1991. The Board has 7 members: the president, vice president, treasurer, general secretary and 3 additional members. The Association has always been the core body working for the advocacy of child and adolescent mental health and for the development of CAP as a separate discipline in medicine (which was officially accepted in 1996).

There are 16 committees within association that work on various subjects, such as infant and adolescent mental health, consultation-liaison, ADHD and learning disorders, autism and other PDD, mood disorders, inpatient psychiatry, disabilities, ethics, trauma, psychopharmacology, children's rights, international affairs, public education and forensic psychiatry. The development of research projects, attempts to increase public awareness of child and adolescent mental health (CAMH), the publication of books and booklets for professionals and the public, the organisation of meetings and training courses and the establishment of a code of ethics are some of the activities conducted by these committees.

A board for training in CAP was established within the Association to coordinate training programmes, work towards standardisation in affiliation with the Union of European Medical Specialties (UEMS), prepare board

exams for qualification, and establish continuing medical education (CME) programmes. The CAP training programme is four years long. Young medical doctors enter the programme after a central medical examination. CAP is currently one of the most highly rated disciplines in the country for beginning residency. The training programme consists of theoretical, clinical and research components conducted in an integrative way. Both the biological and the psychodynamic aspects of CAP are covered in the curriculum, and basic psychotherapy courses are provided. Because some of the CAP departments do not have sufficient academic staff, the Turkish Association establishes complementary education programmes three times a year.

The Association organises the National Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Congress and an Adolescent Psychiatry Symposium annually. The Turkish Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, published quarterly, is the official journal of the Association. Six books have been published, including a textbook on CAP and a handbook for disabled children, *Infant Psychiatry*, *Adolescence in Turkey*, *Eating Disorders*, *Gender Development and Sexuality*, *Situational Analysis of Adolescents in Two Cities*.

The Association was responsible for preparing the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Section of the National Mental Health Policy Program in 2003, which established the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division under the Department of Mental Health within the Ministry of Health. Since then, the Association has served as the Advisory Council for this division, which is the primary body for policy development.

Although the members of the Association work to achieve the aims of our profession, some obstacles remain. An important problem in Turkey is the small number of child and adolescent psychiatrists for the population under eighteen. Turkey has approximately 400 child and adolescent psychiatrists, resulting in a ratio of 1:60000 individuals under age 18. Measures have recently been taken to increase the number of child and adolescent psychiatrists through long-term efforts with policy makers.

There are difficulties in the implementation of prevention programmes that result from both politics and resources. There is a need for a higher number of psychologists, social workers, counsellors and other mental health professionals working in the field as well as child and adolescent psychiatrists. We are working in collaboration with other professional organisations to increase these numbers. Financial sources for projects can be obtained rather easily from international institutes or nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), such as the EU, UNICEF, and others. However, the sustainability of the programmes remains a problem.

Currently, most CAP services are provided by university departments. There are 40 university clinics and 35 state hospital clinics. However, only six of the CAP clinics have inpatient units, and CAP patients usually must be admitted to either paediatric or adult psychiatric wards. One problem is that each child psychiatry department must act on a local

hospital level because of a lack of proper implementation of country-wide policy projects.

Additional epidemiological studies must be conducted to determine the number of children suffering from mental problems in Turkey. The most frequently diagnosed psychiatric disorders are anxiety disorders among children and adolescents, followed by depressive disorders. Substance abuse disorders and personality disorders are still infrequent. We are a small group facing many difficulties, but we are highly motivated to work for the mental health needs of children, adolescents and families, and we are devoted to doing as much as we can for the further development of our field, both country-wide and internationally. The Association is enthusiastic about international collaborations as well; it is a member of ESCAP and IACAPAP and was the local organising party of the 18th World Congress of IACAPAP in 2008. In collaboration with ESCAP, we would be happy to share our experiences with other countries that are experiencing similar processes of difficulties and to contribute to the further development of our professional field, which we believe will be reciprocal.

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