

**WHO 48<sup>th</sup> Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD)**  
**20-22 October 2025**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**

### **48<sup>th</sup> ECDD Committee Member Biographies**

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**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Alharthy, Basma

**Institutional affiliation(s)** School of Medicine, King Abdulaziz University

**City and country of primary residence** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Dr Basma Alharthy is an Assistant Professor in Clinical Pharmacology at King Abdulaziz University's School of Medicine in Saudi Arabia. She earned her Pharm.D. from King Abdulaziz University in 2007, followed by an MSc in Clinical and Public Health Aspects of Addiction (2009) and a Ph.D. in Addiction Sciences (2015) from King's College London. Her research focuses on using biological tools and drug levels to assess outcomes in methadone maintenance treatment. Since returning to Saudi Arabia, Dr Alharthy has actively contributed to regional and international conferences on substance use disorders, including events in Khartoum, Abu Dhabi, among others. She has also led workshops on methamphetamine use disorder and is dedicated to capacity building in mental health and substance use training, contributing to curriculum development for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Additionally, she has provided expert consultation for substance use treatment facilities in Saudi Arabia, optimizing care and outcomes. Her ongoing research interests center on improving treatment efficacy for substance use disorders using biological tools. She is currently a Visiting Researcher at King's College London's Institute of Pharmaceutical Science. Dr Alharthy is committed to innovative approaches to complex health challenges, exemplified by her collaboration with international institutions. Notably, she is passionate about initiatives on art and mental health to promote public engagement.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Best, Wim

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Freudenthal Institut, Utrecht University

**City and country of primary residence** Utrecht, Netherlands

Dr Wim Best is a pharmacist and toxicologist by training and honorary lecturer at Utrecht University and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Dr Best is a leading expert on narcotic and psychotropic drugs. He gained experience in quality affairs, clinical research, drug safety and scientific evaluation of medicinal and healthcare products in the pharmaceutical industry. Thereafter, in 1998, he was appointed as Senior-Inspector for Healthcare at the Healthcare Inspectorate. From 2002 until 2023 he was Chair of the Department of Narcotic and Psychotropic drugs at the Health and Youth Care Inspectorate, where he was responsible for legal aspects and policies concerning narcotic and psychotropic drugs. He is also a member of international committees and working groups for risk assessment and drugs monitoring. From 2009 on he is also active as consultant in forensic and behavioral toxicology.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Buitrago, Rosa

**Institutional affiliation(s)** School of Pharmacy - Universidad de Panamá

**City and country of primary residence** Panama, Panama

Dr Rosa Buitrago is a Professor of Pharmacology and cancer pain management with expertise in access to controlled medicines. She has been working during the last 21 years improving access to controlled medicines not only in Panama but also in Central America and other countries in Latin America region. She was part of the first cohort of IPPSG from University of Wisconsin and served to WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence group. She has been peer reviewer of different WHO documents related to this field and have been using different guidelines

prepared by WHO in helping countries to increase access to controlled medicines. She has introduced relevant graduate programs to prepare health care professionals in access to controlled medicines, pain management and palliative care. She collaborated with UNODC in a consultancy on "Access to controlled medicines in Panama" and was part of the GDG that worked to develop the new document on: "WHO Guideline on balanced national controlled medicines policies to ensure medical access and safety".

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Comer, Sandra

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Columbia University

**City and country of primary residence** New York, United States of America

Dr Sandra Comer is Professor of Clinical Neurobiology in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University. She received her BS at Vanderbilt University and PhD at the University of Michigan for her research on the effects of drugs using preclinical models. Dr Comer is Director of the Opioid Laboratory in the Division on Substance Use Disorders and her current research focus is on the clinical testing of medications and devices for treating opioid use disorder, withdrawal, and overdose. She also studies methods to maximize the use of naloxone by people who use opioids. These projects are funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Dr Comer served as President of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence, the longest standing scholarly society in the U.S. devoted to research on substance use disorders, and currently is the Public Policy Officer for CPDD. She also currently is President of the Friends of NIDA and a member of the Human Research Protection Program Advisory Committee at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Dr. Comer is a member of the Expert Advisory Panel on Drug Dependence for the World Health Organization, consultant for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and has over 200 publications on substance use disorders.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Ekwere, Ifeoma T.

**Institutional affiliation(s)** University of Benin

**City and country of primary residence** Benin, Nigeria

Dr Ifeoma Toyin Ekwere is a senior consultant anaesthesiologist and specialist in critical care and pain management, serves as a program manager at the Institute of Global Perioperative Care. She is a fellow of the West African College of Surgeons, the National Postgraduate Medical College, and the International College of Surgeons. Her professional journey is marked by her commitment to advancing medical knowledge and practice in the University of Benin and the University of Benin Teaching Hospital where she served as a senior lecturer in the School of Medicine and an honorary consultant in the Department of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. Dr. Ekwere obtained her medical degree from the University of Nigeria and a Master's degree in Human Physiology from Delta State University. She holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Anaesthesia and a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Benin. She also received a diploma in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia/Intensive care from the Edith Wolfson Hospital in Israel. Dr Ifeoma Ekwere is involved in research focused on pain medicine, anaesthesiology, and critical care and obtained research training from the Clinical Research Fastrack, Arizona. She has published scientific articles in various peer-reviewed medical journals and has supervised numerous postgraduate dissertations. She is a postgraduate examiner with the West African College of Surgeons and the National Postgraduate Medical College (Faculty of

Anaesthesia). She is also a member of various learned societies, a former member of the Ethics/Research Committee at UBTH, and a former executive council member of the Nigerian Society of Anaesthetists. She is a recipient of various awards and prizes.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Farrell, Michael

**Institutional affiliation(s)** University of New South Wales Sydney

**City and country of primary residence** Sydney, Australia

Professor Michael Farrell FRCP, FRCPsych, FASSA. is a leading physician and psychiatrist in addictions and substance use research. He is Director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. He leads a research centre, delivering translational research for marginalised populations. A former Vice Dean at the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, former Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the EMCDDA. A founding editor of the Cochrane Drug and Alcohol Group. He was awarded the Distinguished Graduate Award for 2024 from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He has made sustained contributions to treatment development, clinical guidelines, screening and outcome measures and clinical trials and broad policy. He is a former Chair of the Australian National Advisory Council on Alcohol and other Drugs and current member. He has been a member of the ECCDD since 1995.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Jain, Raka

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Christian Medical College Vellore

**City and country of primary residence** New Delhi, India

Professor Raka Jain is a Clinical Chemist and Toxicologist. She joined the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry (1988) and superannuated from AIIMS as Senior Professor and Professor in-charge de-addiction laboratories in Oct. 2022. Presently, she is Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Christian Medical College Vellore, India. Her research focuses on Drug Addiction, Drug Analysis (Toxicology, Newer Psychoactive Substances), Neuro-Psychopharmacology, Abuse liability of psychotropic drugs and Tobacco cessation. Planned and established Drug Abuse Testing, NPS Testing, and pre-clinical Behavior Laboratories at NDDTC AIIMS. She has 37 years of experience in postgraduate education (medical students), research, testing of drugs in patient's body fluid and training of Drug Testing to national health professionals. Professor Jain has been the recipient of professional honors and awards (Chartered Chemist and a fellow of RSC UK, UNDCP fellowship, NIDA INVEST and NIDA DISCA (Distinguished International Scientific Collaboration Award) award US Govt., NIDA international travel awards for presenting research papers in NIDA International forum meetings, USA). She has been associated with WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Drug Dependence (ECDD) since 2015.

Professor Jain is a peer reviewer for National and International Journals and member of national and international societies and advisory committees. Publication records include 161 research papers in indexed journals and 34 Chapters in Books/reports/manuals/monographs. She has also received many research grants funded by international and national bodies. Professor Jain has also served as Chief Supervisor for many Postgraduate Medical Students M.D. Thesis and Ph.D. students (Addiction Psychiatry).

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Kaduri, Pamela

**Institutional affiliation(s)** University of Toronto / Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences

**City and country of primary residence** Toronto, Canada / Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Dr Pamela Kaduri (MD, Mmed, MscCH) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto (UoT), and a staff Psychiatrist in the Addictions Division at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Canada. Dr Kaduri is also an adjunct faculty at the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), United Republic of Tanzania. Dr Kaduri has been extensively involved in training, education, research, and policy development in areas of addiction and mental health. As an addiction psychiatrist, she has vast experience in providing clinical care to patients with substance use disorders and or concurrent disorders from both Canadian and African contexts. Dr Kaduri is among the pioneers in the development, implementation and expansion of the methadone assisted treatment programs in the United Republic of Tanzania. She has worked in areas of injection drug use and HIV, drug dependence treatment, opioids, tobacco, alcohol and other interventions including improving access to care for patients with mental health or substance use disorders. She has peer reviewed publications on public health, policy, and treatment in substance use. Dr Kaduri is also a member of various local and international professional bodies and has served as an advisory member in several committees including in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Kasinather, Vicknasingam B.

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Centre for Drug Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia

**City and country of primary residence** Penang, Malaysia

Professor Vicknasingam B Kasinather is currently Professor of Addiction at the Centre for Drug Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He was the former Director of the Centre. His PhD is in behavioral sciences and his current research is focused on understanding and developing interventions for people who use drugs. Since 2016, he has been member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the World Drug Report, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Vienna. He is also on the Scientific Advisory Board of the International Society for the Study of Emerging Drugs (ISSED) and an Associate Editor of the society's journal "Emerging Trends in Novel Psychoactive Substances and the Health Consequences". Currently, he is the Malaysian principal investigator of a nationwide 5-year study entitled "Implementation of seek, test, treat and retain strategies among people who inject drugs in Malaysia" funded by the National Institute of Health US.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Kitanaka, Junichi

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Hyogo Medical University

**City and country of primary residence** Nishinomiya, Japan

Dr Junichi Kitanaka is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the Hyogo College of Medicine in Nishinomiya, Hyogo, Japan. He received his PhDs in Pharmacology from Osaka University and from Hyogo College of Medicine. Dr. Kitanaka completed his postdoctoral



fellowship from the Intramural Research Program, National Institute on Drug Abuse-NIH, USA, under the supervision of Dr. George Uhl. His research focuses on signs and symptoms of methamphetamine abuse and addiction. This includes research on behavioral analyses under acute methamphetamine overdose; studies of pharmacotherapy on methamphetamine abuse; and research on pathophysiological association of methamphetamine effects with brain monoaminergic and histaminergic neuronal systems. He also serves on the DAD editorial board since 2012.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Pascale Prieto, Antonio

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Center of Biomedical Sciences, University of Montevideo.

**City and country of primary residence** Montevideo, Uruguay

Dr Antonio Pascale Prieto obtained his professional degree of medical toxicologist from the University of the Republic, and he is current Professor of the Center of Biomedical Sciences, University of Montevideo. His academic appointments include being Associate Professor of Clinical Toxicology at the School of Medicine, University of the Republic, in Montevideo, Uruguay between May 2013 and February 2021. He was the Director of the National Center for Information and Reference of the Drug Network (National Drug Treatment Center in Montevideo) between October 2020-2023. Dr. Pascale is currently the Director of the Toxicology Service of the National Direction of Police Health, Ministry of Interior, since September 2014. He has participated in several research studies that have examined clinical features and toxicology aspects of drugs overdose and withdrawal syndrome. Dr Pascale is member of the Latin American Network of Drug Research, integrated by recognized experts on drug dependence and coordinated by the Inter-American Drug Observatory of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, and also member of the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists. He is a recognized reviewer for several national and international journals and served as consultant on prevention programs for youth and pregnant women. He has authored a significant number of publications in peer reviewed journals and he has participated as speaker in several international conferences and meetings in United States, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin American countries.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Rahimi-Movaghar, Afarin

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Iranian National Center for Addiction Studies (INCAS), Tehran University of Medical Sciences

**City and country of primary residence** Tehran, Iran

Dr Afarin Rahimi-Movaghar has over 25 years of experience in policy-making and research in mental health and substance use. She has played a key role in developing mental health, demand, and harm reduction programs in Iran over the last two decades.

Dr. Rahimi is primarily interested in health policy and service, clinical, and epidemiology research. Her research experience includes directing several national surveys, such as the two Iranian national mental health and substance use surveys (IranMHS), as well as conducting systematic reviews, clinical trials, and qualitative studies, and developing national or global evidence-based guidelines on mental disorders and substance dependence. She has served as a consultant for various programs in countries of the East Mediterranean region and has been a member of several advisory committees for the WHO, including the WHO Advisory Group on

Development of ICD-11, and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), such as the Strategic Advisory Committee for the World Drug Report.

Currently, Afarin Rahimi-Movaghar is the head of the Iranian National Center for Addiction Studies (INCAS), a WHO collaborating center.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Thanoi, Sutisa

**Institutional affiliation(s)** Naresuan University

**City and country of primary residence** Phitsanulok, Thailand

Sutisa Nudmamud Thanoi is a Professor of Anatomy in the Faculty of Medical Science at Naresuan University. She currently holds multiple leadership roles at Naresuan University, including Director of the Centre of Excellence in Medical Biotechnology and Chair of the Doctoral Programme in Medical Sciences. Sutisa completed her Ph.D in Neuroscience at Sheffield University, UK, where her project focused on the abnormalities of the glutamate neurotransmitter in Schizophrenia. She has continued her research on drug addiction, especially methamphetamine, which is dramatically increasing in Thailand and has become a critical problem in the world. Her research interests focus on neurobiology in drug dependence, including methamphetamine, ecstasy, pseudoephedrine, and dextromethorphan. She is a peer reviewer for national and international journals and has published many research and review articles regarding drug dependence. She has also written a book entitled “Brain and Neurotransmitters: Abnormalities in Drug Addiction”. Currently, Sutisa serves as the President of the Anatomy Association of Thailand and Vice President of the Thai Neuroscience Society. She has chaired scientific committees at both national and international conferences and has been invited to deliver plenary lectures on the effects of drug addiction on the brain. She has received several research grants funded by national and international organisations. In particular, she was awarded funding from the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) to organise Associate Schools of Neuroscience in 2016 and 2023, with the main objective of providing a platform for postgraduate students to broaden their knowledge of neuroscience. She has also been awarded the PMI2 Connect–Research Cooperation and Newton Fund grants from the British Council, which enabled her to establish research collaborations with UK researchers. Additionally, she has ongoing collaborations with researchers in other countries, including France, Australia, and Japan. Her dedication to advancing medical science and her leadership in academia have established her as a prominent figure in the fields of neuroscience in Thailand and beyond.

**Surname, first name(s) and initial** Wolff, Kim

**Institutional affiliation(s)** King’s College London

**City and country of primary residence** London, United Kingdom

Professor Kim Wolff is Director of King’s Forensics at King’s College London and head of the Drug Control Centre, which is the only WADA accredited laboratory for sports testing in the United Kingdom. She is director of the London Athlete Passport Management Unit (APMU). Professor Wolff’s main is a leading expert concerned with the detection of drugs, metabolites and other biomarkers in different matrices. As a senior academic she is experienced in analytical science and teaches basic pharmacokinetics and drugs of abuse to undergraduate and post graduate students. She has been funded by the UK Department for Transport to investigate biomarkers of alcohol misuse in drivers. Her work led to Carbohydrate Deficient Transferrin (CDT) being used

as the sole biomarker for relicensing High-Risk Drink-Drivers. In 2016 Professor Wolff received an MBE in the New Year's Honours for her work as chair of the UK Government's Expert Panel on drug driving leading to the introduction of the new UK drug-driving legislation, a strict liability offence for 17 different drugs and metabolites. She continues to work as a technical expert for the Department for Transport and is currently working on a report about the detection of nitrous oxide in drivers. Professor Wolff has recently led on the writing of a primer for the British judiciary on 'Drug testing and toxicology' and provides expert advice to international organisations such as the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC). She has provided technical expertise to numerous groups including the National Police Chiefs Council and the European Food Safety Authority on the safety of certain cannabinoids and SARMS (selective androgenic receptor agonists) through detection and identification. Professor Wolff is also a member of the expert panel to address corruption in forensic drug analyses hosted by the UNODC. As head of the Drug Control Centre Professor Wolff has overseen the delivery of the testing programme for several major events including the UEFA EUROs football competitions for men and women in 2021/2022. As part of her role, she leads the DCC research team who explore the how drugs are eliminated from the body and carry out drug elimination studies to enhance our understanding of the way in which drugs are excreted following consumption for doping purposes. The Drug Control Centre continues to lead the anti-doping field in research on the detection of biomarkers of growth hormone and has ongoing research in dried blood spots and the detection of exogenous anabolic steroids.