

WHO 49th Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD)
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49th ECDD Committee member biographies

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Please send any comments to ecddsecretariat@who.int

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 the Department of Clinical Pharmacology within the School of Medicine, King Abdulaziz University, 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 PhD in Addiction Sciences (2015) from King's College London, focusing on the use of biological tools and drug levels to assess treatment outcomes in substance use disorders. Since returning to Saudi Arabia, Dr Alharthy has actively contributed to regional and international conferences on mental health, substance use disorders, toxicology, and psychopharmacology. She is dedicated to capacity building in these fields, contributing to curriculum development for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs and more recently, leading workshops on methamphetamine use disorder. She has been an expert consultant for treatment facilities in Saudi Arabia. Her ongoing research interests focus on improving treatment efficacy for mental health and substance use disorders using biological tools. Dr Alharthy is currently a Visiting Researcher at King's College London's Institute of Pharmaceutical Science. She is committed to collaborating with international institutions to develop innovative approaches to public health challenges. She also has a keen interest in promoting public engagement in art and mental health.

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

Institutional affiliation(s) Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

City and country of primary residence Amsterdam, Netherlands (Kingdom of the)

Dr Wim Best is a pharmacist and toxicologist by training and lecturer at 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 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 Maryland

City and country of primary residence Glen Burnie, United States of America

Dr. Ifeoma Toyin Ekwere, a research associate at the University of Maryland and program manager at the Institute of Global Perioperative Care, is a senior consultant anaesthesiologist and specialist in critical care and pain management. She is a fellow of the West African College of Surgeons, the National Postgraduate Medical College, and the International College of Surgeons. Driven by a commitment to advancing global health, medical education, and clinical practice, her career includes serving as a senior lecturer in the School of Medicine at the University of Benin and as an honorary consultant in the Department of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital.

She earned her medical degree from the University of Nigeria, a Master's degree in Human Physiology from Delta State University, and a Master's in Public Health alongside a Postgraduate Diploma in Anaesthesia from the University of Benin. Her additional qualifications include an Associate of Science in Health and Human Services from Florida, USA, and a diploma in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia/Intensive Care from the Edith Wolfson Hospital in Israel.

Dr Ifeoma Ekwere is actively engaged in research focused on pain medicine, anaesthesiology, critical care, and global health, and completed specialized research training through Clinical Research Fastrack in Arizona. Her academic leadership extends to medical publishing, having served as a handling editor for major global health research manuscripts in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University. She has published scientific articles in various peer-reviewed medical journals, supervised numerous postgraduate dissertations, and serves as a postgraduate examiner with the West African College of Surgeons and the National Postgraduate Medical College (Faculty of Anaesthesia). Additionally, she is 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 multiple professional awards and prizes.



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Surname, first name(s) and initial Elliott, Simon

Institutional affiliation(s) Elliott Forensic Consulting Ltd

City and country of primary residence Birmingham, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Dr Simon Elliott has 30 years' experience in clinical and forensic toxicology and is a consultant forensic toxicologist, independent business consultant and director of Elliott Forensic Consulting Ltd and Toxicology UK Ltd. He was previously the managing director of Forensics Ltd (ROAR Forensics) and worked as a senior clinical scientist at Birmingham City Hospital. He is a visiting professor in forensic toxicology at King's College London and holds a BSc in biochemistry from the University of Bath and a PhD in biochemical toxicology from the University of Birmingham. He is a chartered scientist and European registered toxicologist as well as being a member of a number of professional organizations including The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT, President), the London Toxicology Group (LTG), Chartered Society for Forensic Science, Association of Clinical Biochemistry and Royal Society of Chemistry in addition to being a founder and Past-Chair of the UK & Ireland Association of Forensic Toxicologists (UKIAFT). An author of over 100 scientific publications, articles and book chapters, he is on the editorial board of Drug Testing & Analysis, Forensic Science International and the Journal of Analytical Toxicology and an editor of Clarke's Analysis of Drugs and Poisons. Dr Elliott has presented at many national and international meetings as well as presenting expert evidence for many years in coronial, civil and criminal courts.

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. She currently serves as Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology, Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, India.

Her research focuses on Drug Addiction, Drug Analysis (Analytical Toxicology), detection of Newer Psychoactive Substances (NPS), Neuro-Psychopharmacology, Abuse liability of psychotropic drugs and Tobacco cessation. At NDDTC, AIIMS, she planned and established the Drug Abuse Testing Laboratory, NPS Testing Laboratory, and Pre-clinical Behaviour Laboratory. She has over 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 including Chartered Chemist (CCChem) and Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, UK; United Nations fellowship in "Toxicology" under the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control Program (UNDCP); NIDA INVEST (International Visiting Scientists and Technical Exchange) fellowship and NIDA DISCA (Distinguished International Scientific Collaboration Award) award by the U.S. Government. She also received NIDA international travel awards for presenting research papers in NIDA International forum meetings, USA. She has been associated

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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. Her publication records include 164 research papers in indexed journals, 30 Chapters in Books/reports/manuals/monographs and over 120 presentations at national and international conferences. She has also received many research grants by international and national bodies. Professor Jain has also served as Chief Supervisor for numerous postgraduate medical students pursuing their M.D. theses and for Ph.D. scholars in the field of 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, United Republic of 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".

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 a Professor in the Laboratory of Drug Addiction and Experimental Therapeutics, School of Pharmacy, Hyogo Medical University in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan. He received his PhDs in Pharmacology from Osaka University and from Hyogo Medical University (formally 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 (Islamic Republic of)

Dr Afarin Rahimi-Movaghar, Professor of Psychiatry, 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.



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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 on 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 PhD in Neuroscience at Sheffield University, UK, where her project focused on abnormalities in the glutamate neurotransmitter in Schizophrenia. She has continued her research on drug addiction, with a particular focus on methamphetamine, the use of which has dramatically increased in Thailand and remains a significant global public health concern. Her research interests focus on neurobiology in drug dependence, including methamphetamine, ecstasy, pseudoephedrine, and dextromethorphan, as well as psychiatric disorders, including depression and anxiety. She also serves as a peer reviewer for national and international journals and has published many research and review articles regarding drug dependence and psychiatric disorders. 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 as well as psychiatric disorders. 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. Her dedication to advancing medical science and her leadership in academia have established her as a prominent figure in neuroscience in Thailand and beyond.

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