



**Summary of Closing Plenary Remarks Robert L. DuPont, MD at the
6th World Forum Against Drugs
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The world faces a deadly drug epidemic that is spreading and changing rapidly. I have wrestled with this global health problem for five decades – since the end of my medical training in 1968. While this epidemic is endlessly complicated, there are some basic ideas that can guide the global community to turn back the epidemic. I explore these ideas extensively in my new book, *Chemical Slavery: Understanding Addiction and Stopping the Drug Epidemic*.¹ The book is dedicated to Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden and to His Holiness Pope Francis, two world leaders who provide leadership in paving the way forward to emancipation from the dehumanizing modern slavery that is addiction. There is much that is menacing in the current drug scene including not only the legalization for “recreation” of marijuana but also many well-meaning activities that enable drug users who have had repeated serious problems resulting from their drug use to continue using these harmful substances. Added to this is a record-high and increasing number of drug overdose deaths.

Here I want to focus on one very positive recent development: the emergence for the first time of a large and vocal community of people in recovery from addiction, people who have worked their way out of chemical slavery. These individuals have useful stories to tell, in three parts: what their life was like when they were using alcohol and other drugs; what happened to get them to stop using and how they did it; and finally, what life is like for them now that they are drug-free.

¹ DuPont, R. L. (2018). *Chemical slavery: understanding addiction and stopping the drug epidemic*. Rockville, MD: Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. Available Summer 2018 at www.Amazon.com.

I encourage everyone, especially members of WFAD, to listen to the wisdom contained in these stories. There is a remarkable similarity to these unique stories of addiction and recovery. In retrospect, life using drugs was slavery. It was miserable. What happened was always an event imposed on the individual – related to health, legal, family, work, etc. – that powerfully delivered the message that his or her life using could not continue. This is often called “hitting bottom.” Then the addicted person engaged in the challenging and time-consuming activities required to build a drug-free life, sometimes with treatment and often with a community of others in recovery such as but certainly not limited to the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The third phase, recovery, always includes a sobriety date – the date when the addicted person last used any alcohol or other drugs. This date itself is a joyful celebration of emancipation. This is not like recovery from other serious illnesses where the goal is to return to the premorbid state. Recovery from addiction includes a better character, a better quality of life, than the person had even before he or she first used drugs. Recovery, like addiction, is contagious. Unlike addiction, however, recovery is inspiring to all people around the recovering person.

Recovery is possible for every addicted person. Settling for less than drug-free recovery is inhumane and disrespectful. Recovery is fully compatible with the use of medication-assisted treatment, when the patient is taking the medicine as prescribed and when the recovering patient is not using any alcohol or other drugs. With this perspective, the misguided war between addiction treatments that use and do not use medications can be ended and all forms of treatment can be evaluated on their ability to produce lasting recovery. I have promoted a unifying goal for all treatments of five-year recovery.²

WFAD is rooted in the drug-free goal for treatment because WFAD rejects the modern chemical slavery of addiction to alcohol and other drugs. This core value also inspires prevention efforts to help youth grow up drug-free. While there is dispute about adult use of alcohol (and now also for some, marijuana), there is no dispute over the goal for youth of growing up drug-free. The vast majority of drug problems begin in adolescence, a critical time of development when the brain is uniquely vulnerable to the life-long threat of addiction.

² DuPont, R. L., Compton, W. M. & McLellan, A. T. (2015). Five-year recovery: A new standard for assessing effectiveness of substance use disorder treatment. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 58, 1-5; DuPont, R. L. (2016). Getting serious about substance abuse treatment requires adopting the five-year recovery standard. *Journal of Global Drug Policy and Practice*, 10(3).

WFAD is home to people of widely differing views from remarkably different cultures. In our diversity we share two clear and important goals: 1) For addicted people, becoming drug-free and entering into sustained recovery, and 2) For youth, growing up alcohol- and drug-free. In the confusing conflicts and disputes in global drug policy today these two goals distinguish WFAD. They inspire and define our leadership as the world grapples with the modern drug abuse epidemic.

For more about Dr. DuPont and the Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. visit:

www.IBHinc.org and www.OneChoicePrevention.org

