

ATTACHMENT 4



World Health Organization

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In reply please
refer to A2/81/34

Your reference: Facsimile of 16/11/2005

Dr William R. Steiger
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International Affairs
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Global Health Affairs
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
HHH Building, Room 639-H
Washington, D.C. 20201
USA

Dear Dr Steiger,

I acknowledge receipt of your facsimile of 16 November 2005 in which you request clarification on the preparation process and the agenda for the Thirty-fourth meeting of the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD). I would like to address your concerns through the following explanations.

The preparation and the agenda of the Thirty-fourth meeting of the ECDD will follow the *Guidelines for the WHO Review of Dependence-Producing Psychoactive Substances for International Control*. In conformity with WHO's Regulations for Expert Advisory Panels and Committees, the draft agenda for the meeting was prepared by the Secretariat, but the final agenda will be decided upon by the Expert Committee itself at the start of the meeting.

The fact as to whether a substance has been reviewed recently or not, is no criterion for including substances on the agenda for review. Reasons are for example, in the case of dronabinol, that the Committee reported on it after its Thirty-third meeting, but that the report was not sent out by WHO. Instead, the Director-General sent it back to the Committee. In the case of tramadol, the Committee recommended that the subject would be placed on the agenda again, and for gamma-hydroxybutyric acid, information has been brought to WHO's attention which justifies the issue to be put on the agenda.

cc: United States Mission to the United Nations, Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, Attention: International Health Attache

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The developments with regard to the Additional Guidelines since the ECDD's Thirty-third meeting require that the Committee will be informed that the Executive Board did not adopt the proposed guidelines that were drafted on the Committee's initiative, and it must discuss how to proceed without the guidance requested.

The Committee also recommended that SSRI's be placed on the agenda for consideration, not in the context of control, but to promote education and information on the appropriate use of psychoactive drugs. However, as the Secretariat does not consider it to be an appropriate topic it is put on the agenda to discuss whether the issue will come back at a later meeting, and if so, which procedure will be followed.

Buprenorphine and oripavine are placed on the agenda, not for review, but because the Committee decided to make a final decision at the forthcoming ECDD. For the latter two substances, proposals for decisions which are mainly a legal matter now, are in preparation with involvement of WHO's legal department.

Since its first meeting, which was held from 24 to 29 January 1949, an ECDD meeting has been held at least every two years. We regard the next ECDD meeting as extremely urgent as WHO has not been able to hold this meeting since 2002 owing to internal limitations. The International Narcotics Control Board have expressed their support of this view and have therefore encouraged us to organize the meeting in early 2006.

In view of this, the deadline of 3 January 2006 for return of the questionnaires is necessary for the preparation of the meeting documents. We do understand however, that certain countries may have difficulty in adhering to this deadline and for this reason we are prepared, as far as is feasible, to consider late submissions for inclusion in the process.

I hope that these clarifications help to allay your concerns and I stay at your disposal if you need any further information on these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Vladimir K. Lepakhin
Assistant Director-General
Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals