

## Pain & Policy Studies Group • International Pain Policy Fellowship



ARGENTINA

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For further information on Argentina:  
<http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/country/profile/argentina>



### BACKGROUND:

To provide a snapshot of the need for opioids in Argentina, Dr. Eisenclas designed and conducted a survey of the palliative care services and opioid availability in Buenos Aires, the nation's capital and largest city. Its results—a dearth of pain medicines dispensed even in the wealthiest areas—spurred the city's government-appointed Ombudsman to write recommendations calling for palliative care in every public hospital in the city, as well as the assurance of “patients’ accessibility to the analgesic ladder.” It was the first time the phrase “analgesic ladder” — referring to the WHO’s graphic indicating the appropriate medications for three levels of pain— appeared in an Argentine government document. These recommendations remain intact as an official resolution.

### FELLOWSHIP SUCCESSES:

Dr. Eisenclas sent the resolution, on behalf of the Ombudsman and the Argentine Palliative Care Association, to the Ministry of Health, along with a letter calling for the recommendations’ national adoption and a task force to study the problem further. These efforts served to initiate cooperation and raise awareness with the MoH officials in power at the time.

Dr. Eisenclas worked in close collaboration with a lawyer from the National Justice Body, to systematically review the Argentine legislation concerned with opioids to identify the main restrictions concerned with opioid availability. They identified the following: a) excessive prescription requirements for physicians, b) short duration of treatment allowed, c) maximum daily dose of 80 mg of morphine allowed; d) severe penalties for those who speak in public about the advantages of opioids; and e) no language in the legislation about the medical use of opioids.

### ONGOING PROGRESS:

Dr. Eisenclas continues to be active in palliative care, at home and internationally. He has been very active in the leadership of the Latin American Association for Palliative Care (ALCP), and served as President from 2010-2012. In this capacity, he was instrumental in the development and publication of the Atlas of Palliative Care in Latin America in 2012. He is currently the manager of the Latin American edition of ehospice, a globally run news and information resource committed to publishing the latest news, commentary and analysis from the world of hospice, palliative and end of life care.

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE NEEDS:

The Ombudsman's recommendations gained the sympathy of some officials at the Ministry of Health, sparking the beginning of a working relationship at the time. Unfortunately, those officials lost their jobs in the next election, and Dr. Eisenclas' fellowship ran out before he could cultivate the new ones that might have led to policy reform.

## PUBLICATIONS:

- Pastrana T, De Lima L, Wenk R, Eisenclas J, Monti C, Rocafort J, Centeno C (2012). Atlas of Palliative Care in Latin America ALCP. 1st edition. Houston: IAHPC Press.  
<http://cuidadospaliativos.org/uploads/2013/12/Atlas%20of%20Palliative%20Care%20in%20Latin%20America.pdf>
- J. Cleary, L. De Lima, J. Eisenclas, L. Radbruch, J. Torode, and N. I. Cherny. *Formulary availability and regulatory barriers to accessibility of opioids for cancer pain in Latin America and the Caribbean: a report from the Global Opioid Policy Initiative (GOPI)*. Ann Oncol (2013) 24 (suppl 11): xi41-xi50.
- Pastrana T, Eisenclas J, Centano C, De Lima L. Status of palliative care in Latin America: Looking through the Latin American Atlas of Palliative Care. Journal of Supportive and Palliative Care 7(4): 2013, 418-423.



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