

The PACARDO research project: Youthful drug involvement in Central America and the Dominican Republic

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Objective. To estimate the occurrence and school-level clustering of drug involvement among school-attending adolescent youths in each of seven countries in Latin America, drawing upon evidence from the PACARDO research project, a multinational collaborative epidemiological research study. **Methods.** During 1999-2000, anonymous self-administered questionnaires on drug involvement and related behaviors were administered to a cross-sectional, nationally representative sample that included a total of 12 797 students in the following seven countries: Costa Rica (n = 1 702), the Dominican Republic (n = 2 023), El Salvador (n = 1 628), Guatemala (n = 2 530), Honduras (n = 1 752), Nicaragua (n = 1 419), and Panama (n = 1 743). (The PACARDO name

concatenates PA for Panamá, CA for Centroamérica, and RDO for República Dominicana).

Estimates for exposure opportunity and actual use of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, cocaine (crack/coca paste), amphetamines and methamphetamines, tranquilizers