

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

Announcement: Pan Canadian Working Group develops a strategy for innovation and coordination in addiction services.

Treatment works – and more of it is needed - but Canada can also strengthen its support for people with alcohol and drug problems through improved collaboration, communication, and co-ordination between all sectors involved in addressing the harms associated with substance use. That is the message of a pan-Canadian working group charged with developing recommendations for a National Treatment Strategy for people with substance use problems. The working group released its report in Ottawa today (November 18, 2008).

A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada: Recommendations for a National Treatment Strategy is available on line at www.nationalframework-cadrenational.ca. Also available are an executive summary, a list of working group members, and a summary of work already underway to implement the report.

The work was initiated and supported by the British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Ontario, and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA).

The working group was led by two co-chairs:

- Gail Czukar, Executive Vice President of CAMH and President of the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions (CECA)
- Patrick Smith, PhD, Vice-President, Research, Networks and Academic Development, BCMHAS

Their work was supported by an associate co-chair:

- Rita Notarandrea, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, CCSA

Addictions treatment in Canada is delivered by a diverse collection of hospitals, community agencies, private providers, and governments. Provincial governments typically fund the publicly supported programs, although the federal government plays a key role in areas such as aboriginal addiction services and corrections, and through the systems support role of Health Canada.

The foundation of the proposed system for addictions treatment is the adoption of a flexible, tiered model of services and supports that effectively matches the intensity of the addiction problem to the intensity of the treatment. The report highlights the key role played by primary care in responding to substance use problems. An increased focus on the role of primary care will allow treatment providers such as residential addiction programs to focus their services most effectively. In order to provide a comprehensive continuum of care, service providers must also collaborate effectively with the other supports required by people with drug and alcohol problems, particularly mental health programs.

The report also highlights the importance of ensuring the highest quality of addiction services in Canada, including the treatment that is broadly delivered through primary care. To accomplish this, the report recommends the development of a knowledge exchange system, as well as national treatment indicators. The comprehensive knowledge exchange system will continually improve services through the communication of information and support for the adoption and implementation of best practices. The treatment indicators will provide a national overview of the availability of addiction services, the effectiveness of treatment, and the cost-effectiveness of public investments in addiction services.

A Systems Approach contains 20 recommendations in total. They include the tiered model, knowledge exchange, and treatment indicators discussed above, as well as efforts to address the stigma and discrimination directed at persons with substance use problems; and stronger support for research on addictions issues.

The 46-member working group included aboriginal representatives, addiction service providers, government representatives, leading addiction researchers, as well as those with lived experience with addictions and their families.

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Related links:

1. Final report of the National Treatment Strategy Working Group: *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada*
2. Executive summary of *A Systems Approach to Substance Use in Canada*
3. List of members of the National Treatment Strategy Working Group
4. Cross-Canada updates: *A Systems Approach* in action