



Second National Report 1999

For further information please contact Colleen Anne Dell, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
Tel: (613) 235-4048 ext. 235
Fax: (613) 235-8101
E-mail: cdell@ccsa.ca

By Christiane Poulin, Eric Single and Pamela Fralick

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU) is an extensive partnership of individuals and agencies with an active interest and involvement in the field of addictions. We thank all who participated in this venture to improve our knowledge about substance use in urban Canada. We particularly thank Health Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who contributed welcome resources, both financial and service-in-kind, to ensure the success and continuity of the Network.

Executive Summary

The Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU) was created in response to an identified need for a surveillance system spanning Canada, bringing together locally relevant information on drug use, health and legal consequences of use, treatment and law enforcement. The compilation of such essential information is intended to facilitate [he development, implementation and evaluation of effective strategies to deal with substance abuse at the local, provincial and national levels.

Beyond coordinating and facilitating the collection, organization and dissemination of surveillance information, CCENDU was conceived to

foster networking among key multi-sectoral partners, to improve the quality of data currently being gathered, and to ultimately serve as an early warning network concerning emerging trends. Since its earlier pilot phase reported on in the Inaugural National Report, CCENDU has also acknowledged and undertaken a role in responding quickly to requests for current information on emerging drugs of abuse and issues of concern. The adopted model facilitates rapid dissemination of these sorts of requests across the country, and an equally speedy ability to respond. This is a "first" in this field in Canada, a country typically limited in its country-wide approach to substance use, due to health issues being a provincial, rather than national mandate.

Fourteen cities are currently involved with CCENDU, to varying degrees. For this report, eight sites have provided local reports for inclusion in the national report: Halifax, Fredericton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver. Two other sites have been part of the network for approximately one year, but have not yet been in a position to provide local reports: St. John's and Whitehorse. Four additional sites are at various stages of involvement, exploring the feasibility of becoming network members: Ottawa, Windsor, Edmonton and Victoria.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse provides national coordination, and a Steering Committee provides ongoing guidance to the overall initiative, as well as funding for various components.

Data and information are collected in nine major areas: alcohol, cocaine, cannabis, heroin, sedative-hypnotics and tranquillizers, hallucinogens other than cannabis, stimulants other than cocaine, HIV and AIDS, and needle exchange. Summaries of national data, as well as local site information, are provided for indicators in each of these issue areas. For the 1999 report, a special section was dedicated to injection drug use and communicable disease. In addition, special reports were provided by Toronto on three issues of concern: young homeless parents, methadone maintenance, and alcohol and harm reduction.

This report will appear every year, resources pending. Since, in Canada, new data are not available each year for every indicator, a special focus on current, high-priority issues will be provided in order to ensure "value added" within each report.

CCENDU must be recognized as a long-term initiative. It will require adequate levels of funding and continued support at all levels to

achieve all its stated goals. While its networking capacity is already being realized and valued by all participants, more time is needed to address data limitations, methodological inconsistencies and timeliness of reporting. These are the challenges of the future, the resolution of which will bring Canada in line with international standards already in place. The foundation has been laid. With the ongoing support of all stakeholders, we have the building blocks of a first-rate, Canadian-grown data development network, ready to take us into the new millennium.
