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**Foreign Affairs support brings Virtual Clearinghouse to life**

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**Since 1995, CCSA has promoted the potential of the Internet as a means of identifying and disseminating dependable and timely substance abuse information. Now, with the financial assistance of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the dream of a fully operational worldwide virtual clearinghouse on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs has become a reality.**

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DFAIT is providing \$250,000 to fund a pilot project that will allow CCSA to fully develop the capability of its Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (VC-ATOD). The funding is being used to hire a co-ordinator, to redesign the existing site (<http://www.atod.org>), to explore new technologies that will enhance communication and networking opportunities, and to expand existing resources and contacts. The site is expected to attract new partners from around the world.

The Virtual Clearinghouse was one of several Internet connectivity initiatives announced by DFAIT during a meeting in early June of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Windsor. To showcase the new online resource, CCSA organized a Web conference that took place from May 29 to June 5 to coincide with the OAS/GA. The online exchange, called a threaded discussion, brought together experts from Argentina, Barbados, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, New Zealand, Peru and the United States to discuss youth at risk and drug abuse.

A synopsis of the Web conference is available at <http://www.atod.org> in the "Archives" section under the "Discussion" heading on the navigation bar.

As an international gateway, the Virtual Clearinghouse provides an essential service in identifying and linking credible, timely and accurate sources of information on the Internet. The information encompasses prevention, treatment, research, enforcement, and policy development and will be of particular interest to organizations employing policy makers, information specialists, and professionals working in prevention or rehabilitation. This Internet venture is sustained by the collaborative efforts of numerous international organizations with an interest in disseminating high-quality information about the nature, extent and consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.

With worldwide access to information and the capability of delivering full-text documents to the desktop, the Virtual Clearinghouse can help substance abuse professionals cope with the rapid proliferation of substance abuse information, especially "fugitive" or "grey" literature, which falls outside the publishing mainstream. The Virtual Clearinghouse provides a potential platform for many other networks and applications, and can serve as an early warning system for emerging issues.

The Clearinghouse is designed to be portable, to have distributed information rather than a central repository, and to be capable of being hosted anywhere. The site is trilingual (English, French and Spanish) and includes a link to machine translation. Among its many features are also an international calendar of events and an e-mail directory of individuals and organizations.

Features on the site include:

- a list of criteria for partnership, and a list of partner organizations with links to their sites;
- a list of emerging topics and networks;
- a Web conference forum;
- an international calendar of events;
- an e-mail directory of individuals and organizations;
- an indexed, fully searchable database of full-text documents from partner sites; and,
- a directory of site links classified by topic.

During the current phase of the project, CCSA will upgrade the existing Web presence by adopting new technology to optimize communication and networking opportunities. As well, current lists of resources and contacts will be expanded, and new partners will be recruited. Further development of the Virtual Clearinghouse will be determined by the need for services and resources as identified through discussions with partners around the world.

To connect to the Virtual Clearinghouse: <http://www.atod.org>

*For more information, please contact Paula Walters-Dazé, Coordinator, Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs, by telephone at (613) 235-4048, extension 224, or by e-mail at [pwalters@ccsa.ca](mailto:pwalters@ccsa.ca)*

**Now available: The one directory you can't afford to be without**

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**This year's edition of CCSA's Directory of Addictions Organizations in Canada lists over 2,000 organizations, and for the first time includes problem gambling listings.**

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This is the only directory of its type in Canada. It provides complete contact information – including address, telephone and fax numbers – for national non-governmental organizations, provincial/territorial agencies and regional offices, Aboriginal organizations, and federal partners in Canada's Drug Strategy.

The 250-page directory is fully indexed for easy access to individual and organizational names. It is spiral bound for convenient use and durability.

The directory costs \$49.95. To order: <http://www.ccsa.ca/ordirect.htm>

## Quebec study challenges conventional beliefs about youth drug use

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**Researchers at McGill University and Université de Montréal have found that problem drug use is the norm among a large minority of 15- and 16-year-olds who have used illegal drugs more than a few times. Moreover, drug use is commonly incorporated into two major routine activities of teenagers – going to school and playing sports.**

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In the most recent phase of a long-term study that has evaluated the yearly progress of almost 2,000 Quebec children since kindergarten, the researchers found that almost one-third of 15- and 16-year-olds have used illegal drugs more than five times. Of that group, more than 70% have been high at school, and the majority reported playing sports while high and using drugs in the morning.

Marijuana was the most commonly used illegal substance in the study, followed by hallucinogens. Although alcohol was used more frequently than illegal drugs, researchers were surprised to find that problem use of alcohol was less common – with the exception of getting into fights – than problem use of drugs, especially marijuana.

"I expected to find (for marijuana) what we found for alcohol – that most kids use it on weekends, that going to school drunk is uncommon," said Dr. Mark Zoccolillo, a psychiatrist at the Montreal Children's Hospital and one of the authors of the study.

"The pattern for marijuana is not the same," Dr. Zoccolillo told the *Montreal Gazette*. "I think the common assumption is that kids are using pot at a party, not four or five times a week. Adolescents really dive into it – it becomes part of daily life."

The study also dispels the myth that only troubled teenagers use marijuana. Randomly selected 15- and 16-year-olds were just as likely as teens with previous behaviour problems to use marijuana, and to use it often. The researchers also found no differences between urban and rural kids, or rich and poor, in terms of frequency of marijuana use.

The authors point out that few of the teenagers in their study would meet DSM-IV criteria for substance dependence or abuse, which include "substance-related absences, suspensions, or expulsions from school". Nonetheless, they argue that attending school and playing sports under the influence of drugs, or using drugs several times a week and in the morning, are "intrinsically problematic from a developmental perspective" for 15- and 16-year-olds. They recommend that consideration be given to the development of diagnostic criteria specific to adolescent problem drug use.

The study was published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (38:900-907). To contact Dr. Zoccolillo: [mzocco@po-box.mcgill.ca](mailto:mzocco@po-box.mcgill.ca)

## **CCSA joins the Canadian Health Network as an Affiliate Partner**

**CCSA has been chosen to lead a consortium of organizations that will provide the federal government's new Internet-based Canadian Health Network (CHN) with content expertise in the area of substance abuse and addictions.**

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The consortium, which also includes the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) and Ontario's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), will function as a CHN Affiliate, identifying credible sources of information and responding to health information requests from the Canadian public.

CHN is a national, bilingual Internet-based consumer health information service funded by Health Canada. Partners include Health Canada, other federal departments, provincial and territorial governments, as well as community-based organizations, libraries and universities. CHN is guided by a 19-member advisory board of directors representing key CHN participants. The federal government has promised to invest \$32 million in CHN over three years.

The CHN Web site currently links to more than 5,000 resources provided by 400 non-profit health organizations across Canada. These organizations, designated as Associate Partners, work with Affiliates to fill information gaps and share resources with CHN through links from the CHN site to their sites. CHN's subject index includes more than 1,000 terms pointing to information on 26 major health topics and demographic groups.

Find CHN at: <http://canadian-health-network.ca> For more information, contact CCSA's CHN coordinator, Kendra Smith, at [ksmith@ccsa.ca](mailto:ksmith@ccsa.ca). If your organization is interested in becoming an Associate Partner, CCSA can provide you with a list of the criteria and other details.

## **Drug Dependency Services opens free acupuncture clinics in Halifax**

**Publicly funded access to auricular acupuncture is being offered in two Halifax-area locations for the treatment of addictive behaviours. Four more clinics are planned by next fall. A recent US study suggests the therapy may be a valuable component of substance abuse treatment, especially where availability of residential care is limited.**

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Drug Dependency Services (DDS) funded the first free public acupuncture clinic in the Halifax area at the Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth. The clinic opened on a pilot basis in 1997 primarily to help clients who wanted to quit smoking. The clinic expanded in July, 1999, to treat all addictions.

The technique involves the painless superficial piercing of the ears with thin acupuncture needles to treat withdrawal symptoms and craving. As many as five needles are used on each ear and are left in place for up to 45 minutes.

Acupuncturists believe that placing needles at strategic points on the body can stimulate internal energy and strengthen the body's balancing mechanisms.

Following the success of its Dartmouth clinic, DDS opened a second clinic in Matrix, a treatment centre for women. Acupuncturist Don Himmelman says DDS plans to establish two more clinics: an open clinic for men and women in its Halifax office this summer, and another for clients of its Dartmouth detox unit in September.

Later this year, the service will also be offered by two private, non-profit organizations: Alcare, a long-term residence for men, and the Eagle's Nest recovery centre for Aboriginal clients in Shubenacadie.

Himmelman, who trained as an Acupuncture Detoxification Specialist (ADS) in England 10 years ago, approached DDS with the idea of offering the therapy after moving to Halifax. With DDS support, Himmelman has become an ADS trainer and says 21 graduates have completed training so far.

Evidence for the effectiveness of auricular acupuncture was recently reported in the *Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application*. Researchers at Boston University and the Boston Public Health Commission compared re-admission rates for detox for patients treated in an outpatient acupuncture program and for patients treated in a short-term residential detox program. Eighteen per cent of the acupuncture clients were re-admitted to detox within six months, compared with 36% of the residential clients.

The authors of the Boston study found that acupuncture was particularly beneficial for clients who had had two or more detox admissions in the year before the study. They also found that the technique was of greater value for clients whose substance of choice was alcohol. When other drugs were involved, re-admission rates for the two programs were similar. The authors also noted the value of motivational counselling as an adjunct to acupuncture therapy in the group they studied.

Himmelman says that in his experience the technique works well with a broad spectrum of addictions, including alcohol, cocaine, heroin, nicotine, gambling, and even eating disorders and sexual addictions. He notes that it is one of many useful tools – by no means the only one – and is most effective in the early stages of withdrawal, even before accessing other programs.

*To contact Don Himmelman: 1285 Woodstock Road, RR3, Mahone Bay, N.S. Canada B0J 2E0 902-624-0066, fax 902-624-0144, e-mail: [fengshui@tallships.ca](mailto:fengshui@tallships.ca)*

## **Bacchus Canada reorganizes to offer alcohol education in secondary schools**

**Bacchus Canada, established 14 years ago to address alcohol-related issues on post-secondary campuses, has now become one of two divisions within a new larger organization called the Student Life Education Company Inc. A second division has been established to address the need for alcohol education in high schools.**

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Bacchus will continue to offer post-secondary programs such as National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week (NCAAW), Safe Break, and the National Training Conference. The new division, "Student Life Now!", will offer alcohol education programming geared to high schools, building on the success of Bacchus's programs, materials and peer-based education formula.

The new division will immediately assume responsibility for National Students Against Impaired Driving (NSAID) Day, an annual day of action launched by Bacchus Canada in October, 1999. The division will also design and deliver training programs and other much needed resources.

The national office of the Student Life Education Company in Toronto will undertake projects aimed at both student audiences. A task force has already been established to create new resources in anticipation of an increased number of new post-secondary students in Ontario in the fall of 2003. It is expected that the influx will result in significantly more students under the legal drinking age.

Fran Wdowczyk, former manager of student housing and residence life at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, has been appointed executive director of the Student Life Education Company. The new Student Life Now! division will be directed by Maria Stramaglia, formerly a residence life area coordinator at Wilfrid Laurier University. Jen Guy, a teacher at the Glebe Montessori School in Ottawa, becomes director of the Post-Secondary Division on July 10.

Carmi Camicata, Bacchus Canada's founder, becomes director of fundraising for the Student Life Education Company. Carmi will also continue to manage the Campus Hospitality Managers Association, housed within the Company's national office.

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## **Training program focuses on the link between literacy and substance abuse**

**A Montreal-based organization is helping recovering substance abusers to re-integrate into community life by providing them with literacy training. Action ABC's work with a wide range of clients has revealed some fascinating relationships between progress toward literacy and factors such as gender, marital status and drug of choice.**

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Action ABC currently offers their unique bilingual program in hospitals and treatment settings in Montreal and Toronto. Founder and director Lisa Lucas says her organization has a national mandate and is committed to making front-line literacy training more available in rehabilitation centres across Canada. Lucas told a recent conference on literacy and health in Ottawa that she believes "literacy skills are essential to establishing a viable, self-sufficient existence within society".

Lucas started developing her program in 1997 while doing graduate work in education at a maximum security prison north of Montreal. Action ABC took on its current formal structure as part of the Jewish General Hospital's methadone program, and soon expanded its one-on-one tutoring service to the Montreal General's addiction unit, Douglas Hospital (for clients with concurrent disorders), and Centre de recherche et d'aide pour narcomanes. A year ago, Action ABC set up shop in Toronto at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Clients who are referred to the program are benchmark tested to assess their literacy skills. Progress is monitored by tracking the number of literacy levels, as defined by UNESCO, that a student advances. At level three – the program uses four levels – students begin to learn functional literacy skills such as word processing, job hunting, résumé writing, basic numeracy and budgeting.



Starting in 1999, Action ABC monitored 120 students over 18 months and found wide variations in progress according to each student's drug of abuse. Prescription drug users improved the most (42.9% progressed two literacy levels), followed by heroin users (11.1% progressed two literacy levels), alcohol abusers (10.3% progressed two literacy levels), and cocaine users (4.3% progressed two literacy levels). Marijuana users made no progress at all.

The study also revealed that the most progress was made by students who were employed, married, single women with boyfriends, female, and individuals with no criminal record.

*Action ABC is funded by the National Literacy Secretariat, and through private and corporate donations. To contact Lisa Lucas: Action ABC Inc., 500 Clarke Ave., Westmount, QC H3X 2E1 Tel.: 514 235-7440; fax: 514 935-9328; e-mail: [lisa.lucas@sympatico.ca](mailto:lisa.lucas@sympatico.ca)*

## **Calendar of events**

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**For a listing of events by date: <http://www.ccsa.ca/calendar.htm>**

**To add information about an upcoming substance abuse or addiction-related conference, please contact [whatsnew@ccsa.ca](mailto:whatsnew@ccsa.ca)**

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