



**Vol. X No. 3 (2000)**

**Action News** is published by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse,  
75 Albert St., Suite 300, Ottawa, ON K1P 5E7.  
Editor: Richard Garlick, [rgarlick@ccsa.ca](mailto:rgarlick@ccsa.ca)

ISSN 1701-4522

***In this issue***

[Breakfast at CCSA: In search of agreement on drugs](#)

[Action on gambling: Meeting looks at ways to measure impacts](#)

[Under the influence: Drug/alcohol involvement among arrestees](#)

[Crisis, what crisis?: A researcher's concern about student drug use](#)

[US moves to 0.08: New law penalizes states that don't obey](#)

[Impairment at 0.04: Performance effects of low-dose alcohol use](#)

[CICH Profile goes to 3rd edition](#)

[New people at CCSA](#)

[Calendar of Events](#)

***NEXT ISSUE: Pressure grows for a new drug strategy***

## **Breakfast at CCSA: In search of agreement on drugs**

---

**Even if they hadn't said anything interesting – which they did – the participants at a special breakfast meeting hosted by CCSA in October would have made history just by being in the same room together. There was Dr. Don Vereen, Deputy Director of the US Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), sitting across the table from Dan Gardner, a columnist with the Ottawa Citizen and a long-time critic of US drug policy. There was Chief Barry King of the Brockville Police Service, the chair of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's drug committee, exchanging ideas with Eugene Oscapella, a lawyer and chief spokesperson for the Canadian Drug Policy Foundation, which opposes current law enforcement strategies aimed at curbing drug use.**

---

On the menu, besides eggs and muffins, was the topic of drug policy and the direction it should take over the next 5-10 years. Needless to say, there were opposing views, but everyone agreed that meeting face to face was better than sniping at each other through the media. There was also consensus around Dr. Vereen's suggestion that this group become a springboard for an ongoing Canada/US dialogue on drug policy.

Adding to the historical theme, June Sivilli, who coordinates the demand reduction section of the ONDCP, pointed out that this was the first time US demand reduction officials had met with Canadian drug policy people in their own country. Ms Sivilli also welcomed any opportunity to continue the dialogue.

The only disappointment of the day was the absence of Sen. Pierre-Claude Nolin, who headed a Senate Special Committee on Illicit Drugs until the dissolution of Parliament for the Nov. 27 federal election. Sen. Nolin could not attend because of pre-election duties the day the election was called, which also happened to be the day of the breakfast. The Senate committee only met once on Oct. 16 to hear witnesses, but the committee's director of research, Daniel Sansfaçon, told the CCSA breakfast meeting he was confident the committee would be reconstituted following the election.

Dr. Vereen was in Ottawa to address the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Addiction Medicine (CSAM). Incoming CSAM president Dr. Bill Campbell and International Society for Addiction Medicine president Dr. Nady el-Guebaly both took part in the discussion.

Also attending were CCSA associates Eric Single (Policy and Research) and Richard Garlick (Communications), a representative of the US Embassy in Ottawa,

ONDCP officials, and research staff from the Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs.

"This was an amazing opportunity to bring people together who have never talked to each other," said CCSA CEO Michel Perron, who organized and chaired the meeting. "I'm looking forward to our next meeting. I think we can move the current interest in drug policy beyond a polarized debate over prohibition versus legalization."

## **Figuring out how to measure the impact of gambling**

---

**The First International Symposium on the Economic and Social Impacts of Gambling was held in Whistler, BC, in September. The meeting was held to begin work on a set of international guidelines for quantifying the impact of gambling. Participants identified the need to find ways to maximize the economic benefits of gambling, while minimizing its harms.**

---

The meteoric growth of gambling in recent years has taken policy makers and researchers by surprise. As a result, there are few hard facts to draw on in the policy-making process. Participants identified a range of topics and research subjects that must be investigated in order to generate the kind of factual underpinning needed for decisions related to gambling.

A multidisciplinary working group has been established to draft a report of the symposium, and to initiate concrete steps toward development and implementation of a framework for action.

"The symposium has established a basis on which to begin dealing rationally with a complex issue while it is still in a relatively early developmental phase," said organizer Jacques LeCavalier, former CCSA chief executive officer. "We hope that by engaging in constructive dialogue now, future options in dealing with gambling will not be limited to either allowing gaming to grow unchecked, or attempting to drive it underground."

## **More than half of arrestees under the influence: study**

---

**In a study conducted in 26 communities across Canada, police reported that more than half (53%) of the people arrested for criminal offences were under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, or both, when the crimes were committed.**

---

Using a two-page questionnaire called an Arrestee Study Form (ASF), arresting officers recorded their assessment of drug and alcohol involvement in 2,765 arrests made between from May 1-30, 2000. Criminal offences include homicide, assault, property crimes, drug trafficking and impaired driving.

The study was carried out jointly by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) as part of a larger effort aimed at estimating the extent to which alcohol, cocaine, cannabis and heroin contribute to various kinds of crime. The project, believed to be the first of its kind in the world, is being funded by the Office of the Solicitor General, the RCMP, the CACP, Correctional Service of Canada, the National Crime Prevention Centre, Health Canada and the United Nations. Final results are expected by early 2001.

In 1996, CCSA released a comprehensive study of the health, social and economic costs of substance abuse in Canada. Because of insufficient empirical data, estimates of violent crime attributable to substance abuse were conservative, and the proportion of property crimes due to illicit drugs (for example, theft to support a drug habit) could not be estimated at all.

The ASF provides one of three main data streams designed to address this gap. The results will be cross-referenced with lifestyle data collected by Correctional Service of Canada, and interviews with inmates and prisoners on probation in Quebec. When the data are "triangulated", they should show what proportion of crime can be attributed to alcohol and illicit drugs, say principal researchers Serge Brochu and Kai Pernanen.

Once an "attributable fraction" is established, it will be possible to calculate the impact of substance abuse on law enforcement budgets for a full range of criminal offences.

## ASF Highlights

- One-third of arrestees were judged to be under the influence of alcohol, 10% under the influence of drugs, and 10% under the influence of both.
- Among illicit drug users, police said one-third had used cannabis and the same proportion had used cocaine.
- Officers said 25% of arrestees were alcohol abusers, 15% abused one or more illicit drugs, and another 15% abused both alcohol and drugs.
- Cannabis was the drug of abuse in 44% of cases, and cocaine in 39% of cases.
- Officers said 15% of crimes were committed, at least in part, between individuals involved in the drug trafficking economy, including territorial disputes and collection of drug debts.

## Policy debate obscures reality of adolescent drug use

---

**The reality that adolescent drug use has risen dramatically in recent years is being lost in the public debate over legalizing cannabis and other drugs, says a psychiatrist at the Montreal Children's Hospital who recently published a disturbing paper on drug use by Quebec teenagers.**

---

Dr. Mark Zocolillo and a team of researchers from McGill University and Université de Montréal found that 70% of 15- and 16-year-olds who had used illegal drugs more than five times reported being stoned at school, and the majority reported playing sports while stoned and using drugs in the morning (see Action News Vol. X No. 2).

When Dr. Zocolillo reported his findings to the Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs in Ottawa in October, he began his presentation with a slide showing highlights of the 1999 Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS). The survey, carried out every two years by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, shows a doubling of cannabis and hallucinogens use since 1993. US surveys are also showing increases, said Dr. Zocolillo.

"We're back where we were in the late 1970s."

Yet he found a report of the OSDUS data in the June 13 issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal surprisingly upbeat. "I expected more of a concern," he said. "When you see this huge rise in use, that's worrisome. What's going on? Why is it not talked about?"

Dr. Zocolillo thinks the reason it isn't taken more seriously is that adolescents have been forgotten in the politically-charged legalization vs. prohibition debate. "I think people confuse concern with thinking that you just want to make it illegal or put people in jail," he told Action News. "Those are entirely different things."

The next phase of Dr. Zocolillo's research will look at adverse consequences of drug use, the natural history of problem drug use into adulthood, and the relationship of use patterns to dependence.

## **New US law will penalize states that don't adopt 0.08**

---

**A new US law will reduce federal highway funding to states that don't adopt 0.08g% as the legal threshold for drunk driving.**

---

States that don't implement the standard by 2004 will lose 2% of funding, with the penalty rising to a maximum of 8% by 2007. States that adopt the standard by 2007 will be able to reclaim lost funding. Supporters of the legislation say the new law could save 500 lives a year in the US.

President Clinton credited Mothers Against Drunk Driving for overcoming opposition to the law from the alcohol industry. Currently 18 states and Washington, DC impose the 0.08 standard. The limit is 0.10 in 31 states. In Massachusetts, 0.08 is considered evidence, but not proof of drunkenness.

## **Marine cadets show significant impairment at 0.04**

---

**In a recent US study, the performance of marine cadets learning to operate large commercial vessels was significantly impaired at blood-alcohol levels as low as 0.04g%.**

---

At that level, sailors took significantly more time to solve a simulated power plant problem. Researchers from Brown University and its Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies found that the cadets were unaware of their own impairment at low BACs. Low-dose effects would probably be hard for co-workers and supervisors to detect, the authors say.

Source: *Addiction* 2000; 95: 719-726, reported in *DATA*, the Brown University Digest of Addiction Theory and Application. For subscription information, call (800) 333-7771, or e-mail: [manissescs@manisses.com](mailto:manissescs@manisses.com)

## **CICH *Profile* goes to 3rd edition**

---

**The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile – 3rd Edition is now available from the Canadian Institute for Child Health.**

---

The Profile covers a wide range of topics, from pregnancy and birth to youth. The Profile provides a broad spectrum of community health indicators in a reader-friendly format that includes graphs. Cost to CICH members is \$40.50, \$45 to non-members. For more details go to <http://www.cich.ca/resource.htm>, or contact Canadian Institute of Child Health, 384 Bank Street, Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1Y4 Tel.: (613) 230-8838; fax: (613) 230-6654, e-mail: [cich@cich.ca](mailto:cich@cich.ca)

## **New people at CCSA**

CCSA recently welcomed an influx of fresh troops, including **Nina Frey**, Senior Information Specialist (National Clearinghouse), formerly with the International Development Research Centre; **Manon Blouin**, Library and Information Technician, a recent graduate of Algonquin College; **Elizabeth Lozano**, Coordinator, Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs, formerly with the HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse at the Canadian Public Health Association; and **Elizabeth Loney**, Administrative Officer.

CCSA also welcomes two new associates. **Alan Ogborne** has a PhD in Social Psychology from the London School of Economics, and has had a long and distinguished career as a scientist and educator in addictions, specializing in treatment service development and evaluation. **Jamie Wiebe** has been a researcher for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. Now completing a PhD in Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba, Jamie will focus on Injection Drug Use and gambling issues for CCSA.

## **Calendar of events**

---

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)

---