



CONCURRENT DISORDERS

CAPACITY BUILDING TEAM

June Newsletter

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Unintended Consequences of COVID-19: Impact on Harms Caused by Substance Use

A report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information examines harms caused by substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic, analyzing emergency department (ED) visits and inpatient hospitalizations.

The report highlights the key findings that more Canadians received substance-related hospital care during the pandemic (March – December 2020) than in the same period in 2019. Each of the findings demonstrate the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on different populations. Key findings include:

- Increases in ED visits and hospitalizations for opioid, stimulant and cannabis harms, and in alcohol-related hospitalizations during the pandemic
 - Decrease in ED visits for alcohol harms may be attributed to changes in behaviour due to pandemic restrictions in place – increase in hospitalizations likely due to reported increased alcohol consumption among Canadians
- Males and those in lowest-income areas saw the highest increase in substance-related harms
 - Male hospitalizations for substance harms during the pandemic rose by 8% from 2019, compared to a 1% increase for females
 - Alcohol and opioid-related hospitalization increased most in lowest-income areas
- Deaths increased in both ED and inpatient setting
 - 12% increase in ED and 13% in inpatient setting
 - May be due to drug supply changes and reduced access to mental health and addiction services

It remains essential to continue to monitor and report on the developing situation in Canada which includes the concurrent public health crises of COVID-19 and substance-related overdoses.

[Click Here](#) for the full report

National Overdose Response Service (NORS)

National Overdose Response Service (NORS) is a recently formed peer-run and peer-led Canada-wide overdose prevention hotline. It aims to prevent deadly overdoses and to support individuals who use substances alone. NORS is a collaboration between individuals who use drugs, Grenfell Ministries, Brave Technology Co-op and Dr. Monty Ghosh.

NORS can help to mitigate the following barriers in regards to safe consumption:

- Geographic barriers – most overdoses occur in suburban and rural communities from people using alone, and physical supervised consumption sites statistically reduce overdose deaths within only 500 metres of the site
- Limited hours of supervised consumption
- Stigma barriers – individuals may avoid supervised consumption sites out of fear of recognition and subsequent stigmatization

Individuals can call 1-888-688-NORS (6677) from anywhere within Canada to be connected to a virtual overdose supervisor volunteer who will monitor and check in periodically and will call 911 if there is no response. Callers also have the option of providing the number of a friend or someone they trust to respond to them in the event of an overdose, rather than emergency services.

[Click Here](#) for the website

*“Being able to be your true self is one of the strongest components of good mental health”
—Dr. Laura Fogel Mersy*



Cannabis Column

COVID-19 and Cannabis Smoking and Vaping: Four Things You Should Know

Contrary to the inaccurate information on social media, there is no scientific evidence that exhibits the benefits of either THC or CBD in preventing or treating COVID-19. Evidence has previously shown that inhaling cannabis smoke can have negative effects on the respiratory system. Having a compromised respiratory system may increase an individual's susceptibility to contracting COVID-19, as well as having a worsening of the respiratory symptoms associated with COVID-19.

A recent study by Liu et al. (2020) showed that people who smoked were 14 times more likely to develop COVID-19 complications compared to those who do not smoke when looking at the risk factors leading to COVID-19 complications in COVID-19-induced pneumonia. Further research is still needed to determine the extent to which cannabis smoking is a risk factor for COVID-19 respiratory complications.

Four things to know about COVID-19 and cannabis smoking and cannabis vaping:

1. **Cannabis smoke contains many chemicals and fine particles**
2. **Cannabis smoking can have negative impacts on lung health**
3. **THC from cannabis smoke and other forms can inhibit the ability of the immune system**
4. **Vaping of unregulated cannabis extracts can lead to severe lung and pulmonary illnesses**

[Click Here](#) to see the full article

Addressing the Unique Needs of Young Adults in Addictions Care

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton has launched a new Young Adult Substance Use Program (YA-SUP) aimed at providing early help to young adults struggling with substance use. The program will provide treatment for more than 600 youth and young adults between the ages of 17-25 over the next three years.

Experimentation with substances often begins in the teens and peaks in young adulthood, and for some it can become a lifelong battle against addiction. Services targeted towards young adults are important for engaging youth in treatment and encouraging them to stick with their recommended care program.

Based on national and international consultations around best programs, the YA-SUP program will feature:

- Young-adult centred care in a safe(r) space that cares for the whole person
- A sensitive approach to the complex life changes youth may be facing
- A multi-disciplinary team with expertise in social work, community support, nursing, addiction psychology, psychiatry and clinical research
- Personalized virtual or in-person touchpoints with care providers, or in-person if needed
- A combination of one-on-one and group-based support during a 12-week program
- Personalized approach to treatment
- Education and help for loved ones

[Click here](#) for the full article

Clinical Corner

The association between cannabis use and outcome in pharmacological treatment for opioid use disorder

A study published in the Harm Reduction Journal considers cannabis use in the context of opioid use disorder (OUD) and examine past-month cannabis use in patients with OUD, self-reported cannabis-related side effects and cravings, and the association between specific characteristics of cannabis and opioid use during treatment in cannabis users. Individuals participating in this Canadian study were receiving pharmacological treatment for OUD and self-reported on their cannabis use history in the previous 30 days. Participants were also followed for three months with routine urine drug screens to assess opioid use during their treatment. The study aimed to look at the association between any past-month cannabis use and opioid use during treatment.

The outcome of this study did not identify a significant association between self-reported past-month cannabis use compared to no past-month cannabis use and opioid use during treatment. Another finding included that for patients who use cannabis, specific characteristics of cannabis use were identified to be associated with differential outcomes. Amongst patients who used cannabis, those using cannabis daily were less likely to have opioid use during treatment than those who use cannabis occasionally. Associated with less opioid use during treatment amongst cannabis-users were daily use, and reporting cannabis-related side effects (for men). Younger age of onset of cannabis use and cannabis cravings (for women) were associated with worse outcomes. Overall, 75% of cannabis users perceived no impact of cannabis on their OUD treatment.

It remains important to continue to examine the impact of cannabis use in the context of OUD treatment. Understanding the patterns and characteristics of cannabis use which may be more or less a factor for opioid use during treatment might allow healthcare providers to adjust assessments and treatments accordingly to better support patients.

[Click here](#) to view the full study

In the News

Recent and relevant mental health and substance use articles in the news

- [New addiction, mental health centre to be set up in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.](#) (Global News)
- [SisterSpace: Canada's first and only overdose prevention site for women is saving lives](#) (CTV News)
- [CCSA's COVID-19 resource section has what you need to know about the impacts of COVID-19 on substance use](#)
- [Ontario government spending \\$31M more for children, youth mental health services](#) (Global News)
- [Sudbury slams door on temporary safe injection site, bans volunteers from city property](#) (CBC Sudbury)

Your CD Capacity Building Contacts

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Opioid Replacement Therapy consultations available through Addiction Medicine Service Team	Contact Paging

***Updated evening/night coverage for ED/PES: Monday to Thursday 8:00pm-6:00am, Saturday and Sunday 12:00pm-12:00am.**

SJHH Intranet: <http://mystjoes/sites/Depts-A-L/concurrent>

External Website: <https://www.cdcapacitybuilding.com>

Virtual Drop-In Group Information

We are happy to have all of our drop-in groups now running virtually through ZOOM!

Below are the times and a brief description of the group offered by the Community Psychiatry team at W5th

All ZOOM links found at cdcapacitybuilding.com

Mondays 1:30-2:30pm Moving Forward Skillfully * No Referral Required *

- A weekly drop-in class with 6 different modules
- Start any week
- Learn skills from DBT including emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and mindfulness

Tuesdays 1:30-2:30pm SMART Recovery * No Referral Required *

- A drop-in self-help group for recovery from any type of addictive behaviour
- Groups are led by a clinician and volunteer with lived experience
- Limit of 8 participants per group

Wednesdays 1:30-2:30pm Steps to Recovery * No Referral Required *

- A drop-in self-help group with 6 modules to increase motivation to decrease substance use.

Last Wednesday of Every Month 6:30 – 8:30pm Friends and Family Night

- A group for loved ones of those with substance use, mental health or concurrent disorders
- Contains 4 modules on supporting loved ones, creating boundaries, and self-care

Thursday 1:30-3pm -ACT

- A weekly drop-in class with 4 different modules.
- Start any week
- Available to all clients in the Community Psychiatry Clinic with any mental health diagnoses
- Topics from ACT therapy include: mindfulness, clarifying values, committed action, fusion vs. diffusion, control vs. willingness, acceptance as an alternative, and action planning

Monday 10-11:30 am PAWS

- Pick up a package and join any week!
- 6 different topic to help support and strengthen recovery: 1) education around post-acute withdrawal syndrome 2) Physical health exercise and nutrition 3) Mindfulness 4) Sleep hygiene 5) Budgeting and financial security 6) Self-care, balance and resiliency
- These 6 sessions provide us an opportunity to pause, reflect and build on our own foundations of recovery
- Please watch the video(s) listed on cdcapacitybuilding.com ahead of time



CONCURRENT DISORDERS FAMILY NIGHT LAST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH: 6:30- 8:30PM

The Concurrent Disorders Family Night series is a 4-session group (Does Not have to be attended in order) that focuses on supporting families and loved ones of individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. Family Night is largely based upon the therapeutic interventions of CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training) and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).

**No Referral Required* Do not need to attend in order!*

St. Joseph's
Healthcare  Hamilton

**All loved ones, friends
and family members
welcome!**

**Week 1: Values, Recovery
and Acceptance**

**Week 2: Supporting
Yourself while Supporting
Someone with a
Concurrent Disorder**

**Week 3: Effective
Communication and
Support**

**Week 4: Motivating to
Make a Change**

**MORE INFORMATION AND
ZOOM LINK AT**

<https://www.cdcapacitybuilding.com/online-group-link>



Mood Disorders and Substance Use

Presented by:

Shahnawaz Ali, Nurse Practitioner

Shahnawaz Ali is a Nurse Practitioner with the Community Psychiatry Clinic at St. Joseph's West 5th Campus and we are excited to have him speak this month!

Please join us June 21st for a discussion on mood disorders and substance use.

[Attend the session virtually through ZOOM:](#)

Monday June 21st 2021 from 12:00 – 1:00pm

<https://stjosham.zoom.us/j/67422040311?pwd=RzM2TOR1TkZtYXhnU01xTHRGRVp6UT09>

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to register online

If you have any questions, please contact
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