

International - Canada

Published: 01/18/2008 - 21:34

1.

"The North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI) is a carefully controlled (clinical trial) that will test whether medically prescribed heroin can successfully attract and retain street-heroin users who have not benefited from previous repeated attempts at methadone maintenance and abstinence programs.

"The NAOMI study will enrol 470 participants at three sites in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto. The Toronto and Montreal sites are expected to begin recruitment this spring. "Each site will enroll about 157 participants. About half of these volunteers will be assigned to receive pharmaceutical-grade heroin (the experimental group) and half will receive methadone (the control group). The prescribed heroin will be self-administered under careful medical supervision within a specially designed clinic. Those in the heroin group will be treated for 12 months then transitioned, over three months, into either methadone-maintenance therapy or another treatment program. The researchers expect a 6-9 month recruitment period, so that the total time to complete the study will be 21 to 24 months."

Source:

Health Canada News Release, "North America's First Clinical Trial Of Prescribed Heroin Begins Today," Feb. 9, 2005, from the web at <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/26516.html> , last accessed Sept. 18, 2008.

2.

"In 1992 the government approved Canada's Drug Strategy, a co-ordinated effort to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. The strategy calls for a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for drugs and their supply through such activities as control and enforcement, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and harm reduction."

Source:

Report of the Auditor General of Canada 2001, Chapter 11, "Illicit Drugs: The Federal Government's Role" (Ottawa, Canada: Office of the Auditor General, December 2001), p. 1.

3.

"Overall, 44.5% of Canadians report using cannabis at least once in their lifetime, and 14.1% report use during the 12 months

before the survey. Males are more likely than females to have used cannabis in their lifetime (50.1% vs 39.2%) and during the past year (18.2% vs. 10.2%). Younger people are more likely to have ever used cannabis in their lifetime, with almost 70% of those between 18 and 24 having used it at least once. Younger people are also more likely to be past-year users. Almost 30% of 15-17 year olds and just over 47% of 18 and 19 year olds have used cannabis in the past year. Beyond age 45, less than 10% of the population has used cannabis in the past year."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 6.

4.

"Most Canadians drink in moderation. In the 12 months before the survey, 79.3% of Canadians aged 15 or older report consuming alcohol, 14% are former drinkers and 7% lifetime abstainers. Of the past-year drinkers, 44% report drinking weekly. The rate of past-year drinking is significantly higher among males than females (82.0% vs. 76.8%, respectively). Past-year drinking rates peak among youth 18 to 24 years of age, with about 90% of people in that age range consuming alcohol during the course of the year."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 4.

5.

According to the Canadian Addiction Survey, "Excluding cannabis, the illicit drug most commonly used during one's lifetime is reported to be hallucinogens, used by 11.4% of respondents, followed closely by cocaine (10.6%), speed (6.4%) and ecstasy (4.1%). The lifetime use of drugs such as inhalants, heroin, steroids and drugs taken intravenously is about 1% or less of the population. The percentage reporting the use of any five drugs other than cannabis (cocaine or crack; hallucinogens, PCP or LSD; speed or amphetamines; heroin; ecstasy [MDMA]), is 16.5%, and the percentage reporting the use of any of the eight drugs, including cannabis, is 45.2%."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 7.

6.

According to the Canadian Addiction Survey, "The most commonly reported drug-related harm involves physical health, reported by 30.3% of lifetime and 23.9% of past-year users of drugs other than cannabis, and 15.1% of lifetime and 10.1% of past-year users of any drug. Following physical health, a cluster of harms, represented somewhat equally, includes harms to one's friendship and social life (22.3% and 16.4% of users excluding cannabis, 10.7% and 6% of any drug users), home and marriage (18.9% and 14.1% excluding cannabis, 8.7% and 5.1% of any drug users), work (18.9% and 14.2% excluding cannabis, 9.2% and 5.1% of any drug users), and financial (19.6% and 18.9% excluding cannabis, 8.4% and 6.5% of any drug users)."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 7.

7.

"Self-reported rates of illicit drug use are increasing in Canada. The proportion of Canadians reporting any illicit drug use in their lifetime rose from 28.5% in 1994 to 45.0% in 2004, and in the past 12 months from 7.6% to 14.4%. "The lifetime use of cannabis increased from 23.2% in 1989, to 28.2% in 1994, and to 44.5% in 2004. For cocaine, use rose from 3.5% in 1989, to 3.8% in 1994, and to 10.6% in 2004. For LSD/speed/heroin, the rate rose from 4.1% in 1989 to 5.9% in 1994, and to 13.2% in 2004. "The past-year use of cannabis rose from 6.5% in 1989 to 7.4% in 1994, and to 14.1% in 2004. For cocaine and crack, rates declined from 1.4% in 1989 to 0.7% in 1994, and rose again to 1.9% in 2004. While past-year rates for the combined category of LSD/speed/heroin rose slightly from 0.4% in 1989, to 1.1% in 1994, and to 1.3% in 2004, these findings are not statistically significant."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 11.

8.

According to the Canadian Addiction Survey, "This overall trend of increasing rates of illicit drug use does not translate into changes in reported harms among most of the variables that can be compared across surveys."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 11.

9.

"The data indicate that the number of Canadians who report having used an injectable drug at some point in their life increased from 1.7 million in 1994 to a little over 4.1 million in 2004. Of those, 7.7% (132,000) reported having used a drug by injection in 1994 compared with 6.5% (269,000) in 2004."

Source:

"Canadian Addiction Survey: A National Survey of Canadians' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs: Prevalence of Use and Related Harms," Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, Health Canada, November 2004, p. 11.

10.

"In 1999 about 50,000 people were charged with offences under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act in cases where the most serious offence was drug-related.... In that same year, we estimated that Canadian criminal courts heard 34,000 drug cases that involved more than 400,000 court appearances. About 19 percent of offenders in the federal correctional system are serving sentences for serious drug offences. "For the roughly 50,000 persons charged, 90 percent of the charges related to cannabis and cocaine. Cannabis accounted for over two thirds of the charges, and about half of all charges were for possession."

Source:

Report of the Auditor General of Canada 2001, Chapter 11, "Illicit Drugs: The Federal Government's Role" (Ottawa, Canada: Office of the Auditor General, December 2001), p. 4.

11.

"An estimated 125,000 people in Canada inject drugs. Injection drug use is a major risk factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. In 1999 it resulted in an estimated 34 percent of all new HIV infections."

Source:

Report of the Auditor General of Canada 2001, Chapter 11, "Illicit Drugs: The Federal Government's Role" (Ottawa, Canada: Office of the Auditor General, December 2001), p. 4.

12.

The Auditor General of Canada notes that Correctional Service Canada (CSC), which is responsible for offenders serving criminal sentences of over two years, provides substance abuse and harm reduction services to inmates: "Substance abuse is one of seven criminogenic factors contributing to criminal behaviour. Nearly two thirds of offenders entering the federal corrections system have drug abuse problems. An estimated 5 percent of offenders participate in substance abuse programs while serving their sentences. "In addition to substance abuse programs, CSC has provided methadone treatment to some opiate-addicted injection drug users. Injection drug users pose a serious problem for institutions as they can contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis. As a harm reduction measure, CSC also makes bleach available in prisons to sterilize needles shared by inmates."

Source:

Report of the Auditor General of Canada 2001, Chapter 11, "Illicit Drugs: The Federal Government's Role" (Ottawa, Canada: Office of the Auditor General, December 2001), p. 13.

13.

The Canadian government in 2001 established regulations to expand the use of marijuana as a medicine. According to an editorial in the Canadian Medical Association Journal in May 2001, "The new regulations promise more transparency in the review of applications to grow or possess medicinal marijuana, a broader definition of medical necessity, and greater latitude for physicians in determining the needs of individual patients.... Health Canada's decision to legitimize the medicinal use of marijuana is a step in the right direction. But a bolder stride is needed. The possession of small quantities for personal use should be decriminalized."

Source:

"Marijuana: federal smoke clears, a little," Canadian Medical Association Journal, Vol. 164, No. 10, May 15, 2001, p. 1397.

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