NEW EMCDDA THEMATIC PAPER ON INDICATED PREVENTION

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction has released its latest online thematic paper entitled: Preventing later substance use disorders in at-risk children and adolescents: a review of the theory and evidence base of indicated prevention. The review adds to the current knowledge and understanding of risk factors in the development of later drug problems and dependence, focusing on the mental health and behavioural problems that develop during childhood. Indicated prevention is a relatively new branch of drug prevention and can be seen as the third part of the ‘prevention chain’, after universal and selective prevention. Its aim is not necessarily to prevent drug use or initiation to it, but rather to prevent the development of dependence, diminish frequency of use and avert ‘dangerous’ patterns of substance use (e.g. moderate instead of binge-drinking). The review identifies models of best practice for prevention activities targeting vulnerable children (e.g. primary school age) and adolescents in European countries. Drawing on the current scientific literature, it describes the results of research into psychosocial and individual risk and protective factors. The neurobiology of drug use and how childhood psychiatric or behavioural disorders can predispose to problem drug and alcohol use are also described in detail, as are ethical issues raised by indicated prevention.

The paper is available to download in PDF format at: http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/thematic-papers/indicated-prevention

TOBACCO FIRM OFFERS PERKS TO UK PARLIAMENTARY AIDES

The world’s third largest tobacco company offered entertainment perks to parliamentary researchers as legislation to ban the display of cigarettes went before UK peers and MPs. The Guardian reports that Japan Tobacco, the firm behind brands such as Benson & Hedges, Silk Cut, Camel and Winston, offered a ‘fun evening’ watching the Strictly Come Dancing tour at the O2 Arena at the Millennium Dome in London. The company invited at least two MPs’ aides. Japan Tobacco, part-owned by the Japanese government, has a 40% share of the British cigarette market. It manufactures 600 bn cigarettes a year and is the market leader in Europe, Russia and Japan. The corporate affairs manager told The Guardian: ‘I am struggling to see why they are complaining. This is part of a programme of engagement with people. You invite them along to an event so you can engage with them. Obviously all the time there are issues before parliament on health and cigarettes, and this is part of a normal company programme of events. The company also does a lot of arts and charitable work’.

Source: The Guardian, 23 February 2009

NEW ZEALAND GAMBLING-RELATED CRIME FINDINGS

The Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand reports that about 10 000 New Zealanders committed gambling-related crimes last year, according to new Ministry of Health funded research. This mainly involved stealing and fraud to fund gambling and included an estimated 10% of all slot machine players. The findings are part of a report—Assessment of the Social Impacts of Gambling in New Zealand—produced for the Ministry by the research arm of Massey University.

In the study, more than 7000 people were interviewed by telephone. Of those who admitted to criminal activity, 25% said they would not have done so if they had not been gambling. The heaviest gamblers were men aged 18 to 35 with Maori and Pacific Islanders being overrepresented. They were likely to be single, either sick or unemployed, with only high school qualifications. The report said each gambler affected up to eight other people. It noted that past research found that the majority of people seeking help for problem gambling were slot machine users.

Source: Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand, http://www.pgfnz.co.nz

STANFORD SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY DRUG TO TREAT OPIOID ADDICTION

Scientists at Stanford University School of Medicine have discovered that a commonly available non-addictive drug can prevent symptoms of withdrawal from opioids such as codeine, morphine and heroin with little likelihood...
of serious side effects. The drug, ondansetron, which is already approved in the USA to treat nausea and vomiting, appears to avoid some of the problems that accompany existing treatments for addiction to these powerful drugs. The study is published in the March 2009 issue of Pharmacogenetics and Genomics [1].

Similar to mice, humans treated with ondansetron before or while receiving morphine showed a significant reduction in withdrawal signs compared with when they received morphine but not ondansetron. Plans are underway to conduct a clinical study to confirm the effectiveness of another ondansetron-like drug in treating opioid withdrawal symptoms in a larger group of healthy humans. The research team will also continue to test the effectiveness of ondansetron in treating opioid addiction. The scientists warned that ondansetron will not by itself resolve the problems that arise with continued use of opioids.

Reference

USA SHIFTS DIRECTION FOR SOME ASPECTS OF DRUG POLICY

The US government signalled a change in position on drug demand reduction in a statement delivered to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on 12 February 2009 by Geoffrey Pyatt, Deputy Chief of the United States Mission to International Organizations in Vienna. The statement, relating to Consultations on the Political Declaration as part of the Preparations for the High-level Segment of the 52nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs, declares that: ‘the United States supports needle exchange programs as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases. The United States also supports other evidence-based approaches to reduce the negative health and social consequences of drug abuse, including access to medication-assisted treatment for narcotic addiction, as part of a comprehensive substance abuse treatment protocol . . . However, the United States continues to believe that the term ‘harm reduction’ is ambiguous. It is interpreted by some to include practices that the United States does not wish to endorse or see included in UNGASS documents, not in the Political Declaration nor in the Plan of Action’.

The complete statement can be viewed at: http://vienna.usmission.gov/090212-unodc-cnd.html

NEW METHOD FOR DETECTING 23 DRUGS AND MEDICINES IN SALIVA

A team of scientists from the Institute of Legal Medicine at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain has developed a technique for detecting the presence of 23 illicit drugs and medicines in saliva samples. The method, published in the journal Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry [1], is already being used by the Dirección General de Tráfico in Spain, as part of a European study on the frequency of alcohol and drug consumption amongst drivers. The saliva samples are collected by putting some cotton on the end of a special device placed under the tongue as if it were a lollipop, with an indicator that turns blue when there is a sufficient sample (0.5 millilitres), each piece of cotton is then placed in a tube and labelled for analysis. The research group pointed out that drug and medicine detection in oral fluids is a non-intrusive technique, in contrast to blood or urine analyses. The individual can also be observed directly while taking the samples.

Reference

THE YOUNG ATTRACTED BY ALCOHOL ADVERTS

A large systematic review of more than 13 000 people, published in the open access journal BMC Public Health [1], suggests that exposure to advertisements and product placements, even those supposedly not directed at young people, leads to increased alcohol consumption. This systematic review, funded by the Alcohol and Education Research Council (AERC), is the first to study the effects of advertising, product placement in films, games, sporting events and music videos, depictions of drinking in various media, and exposure to product stands in shops. The authors found that exposure to TV alcohol advertising was associated with an increased tendency to drink, as were magazine advertisements and concession stands at sporting events or concerts.

Reference

Article available at journal website: http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpublichealth
STATE-FUNDED HEROIN BECOMES REALITY IN DENMARK

The Guardian reports that state-funded heroin is becoming a reality in Denmark, the latest in a small, but growing, number of European countries concerned with improving drug users’ quality of life and reducing criminality. Since 1 January 2009, addicts, for whom substitutes such as methadone and subutex have not worked, are able to receive two free doses of heroin a day, paid for by their health system. The initiative was adopted by overwhelming consensus in February 2008, after all but one of the parties represented at the Danish parliament voted in favour of the policy—the only one against it was a tiny far-left party that did not oppose the project per se, but the way it was funded. The move came after positive results from experiments trialling the policy in other European countries, including Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Source: The Guardian, 5 February 2009

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS


6th UK/European Symposium on Addictive Disorders, 14–16 May 2009, Millennium Gloucester Hotel, Kensington, London, UK. Website: http://www.ukesad.org


35th Annual Alcohol Epidemiology Symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society, 1–5 June 2009, Copenhagen, Denmark. Website: http://www.kbs2009.dk


Third Summer Institute on Alcohol, Drugs and Addiction, 12–24 July 2009, Graduate School of Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. An intensive two-week summer programme that seeks to provide an interdisciplinary approach to the study of addiction and to promote opportunities for international networking among participants. Deadline for applications is 1 May 2009. Website: http://www.ishss.uva.nl/addiction


International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE) 2009 Meeting, 24–26 September 2009, Hotel Riviera & Maximilian’s, Trieste, Italy. Website: http://www.theoffice.it/isaje09

European Science Foundation-Linköping University Conference on The changing use and misuse of Catha Edulis (khat) in a changing world: tradition, trade and tragedy, 5–9 October 2009, Scandic Linköping Väst Hotel, Linköping, Sweden. Website: http://www.esf.org/conferences/09274

33rd Annual Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse (AMERSA) National Conference, 5–7 November 2009, DoubleTree Hotel, Bethesda, MD, USA. Call for abstracts by 15 May 2009. Website: http://www.amersa.org or contact Doreen MacLane-Baeder, email: doreen@amersa.org

News and Notes welcomes contributions from its readers. Send your material to Peter Miller, News and Notes Editor, Addiction, National Addiction Centre PO48, 4 Windsor Walk, London SE5 8AE. Fax +44 (0)20 7848 5966; e-mail louisa@addictionjournal.org

Conference entries should be sent to Molly Jarvis at molly@addictionjournal.org. Subject to editorial review, we will be glad to print, free of charge, details of your conference or event, up to 75 words and one entry only. Please send your notification three months before you wish the entry to appear.