



Leading the Way in HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Addiction Research

From Left to Right: Dr. Evan Wood, BCCSU Interim Director, Dr. Patricia Daly, VCH Chief Medical Health Officer, Hon. Terry Lake, B.C. Minister of Health, Dr. Julio Montaner, BC-CfE Director & Hon. Andrew Wilkinson, B.C. Minister of Advance Education

Government funding helps BC-CfE's Hope to Health grow

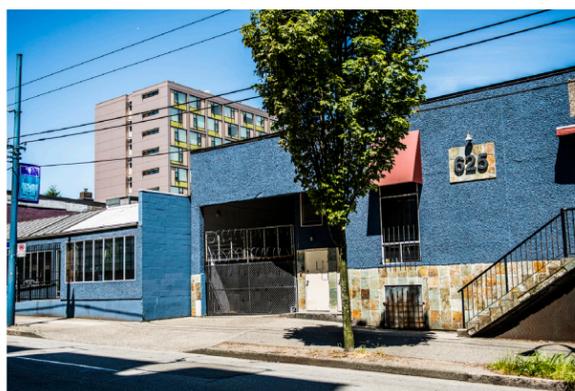
Some of the province's most vulnerable people will benefit from research into HIV/AIDS, addiction and viral hepatitis that will be carried out at the world-class Hope to Health Research Centre following a successful expansion project supported in part through \$2 million in government funding.

"Through the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), Vancouver has long been a leader in the research and treatment of HIV/AIDS," said Health Minister Terry Lake. "This work has dramatically changed the lives of people around the world. And now, through Hope to Health Research Clinic, the BC-CfE will continue to strengthen and inform health strategies through its groundbreaking research on HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and addiction."

Hope to Health is a BC-CfE research clinic, which supports research to adapt, evaluate and expand Treatment as Prevention® to other contagious diseases. Under the leadership of BC-CfE Director, Dr. Julio Montaner, the clinic focuses on three pillars: HIV, addiction and viral hepatitis. The expanded facility at 625 Powell Street will open to clients in February 2017.

Hope to Health officially opened in June 2015 at 611 Powell Street in the Downtown Eastside. Following support from the world's most competitive peer-reviewed granting agencies and the \$2 million provided to St. Paul's Foundation in 2015 to help the clinic expand, 625 Powell Street was further developed, adding an additional 186 square metres (20,000 square feet) to the existing facility.

"The BC-CfE has a long and successful history of addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable populations in B.C.," said Dr. Julio Montaner. "We are grateful to the Province for the trust it has put in our team to continue our research towards developing innovative, evidence-based health policy strategies to improve the lives of British Columbians and people around the world."



Research from Hope to Health is helping to inform the work of the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), which was established in part through a \$5 million investment announced in September 2016. The BCCSU is working with addictions experts around the province on research, education and training, and treatment guidelines to make sure substance-use treatment in B.C. is effective and evidence-based.

"Addiction is one of the most prevalent and costly diseases in our society," said Dr. Evan Wood, interim director, BC Centre on Substance Use, BC-CfE, and

medical director, Addictions Services, Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care. "The B.C. government's investment in the establishment of the BC Centre on Substance Use and in the expansion of Hope to Health is a reflection of its continued commitment to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people living in B.C., and will also play an important role in addressing the overdose crisis over the long-term."

The BC-CfE has partnered with Vancouver Coastal Health to establish a low-threshold addiction clinic and an eye clinic also located at 625 Powell Street to serve people in the Downtown Eastside. Both clinics are set to open this spring. The addiction clinic will have a pharmacy onsite and will be able to dispense medications for treating substance use disorders and other issues including HIV and hepatitis C. Referrals can be made for treatment beds, counselling and other services not offered at the clinic.

"Vancouver Coastal Health has worked successfully with the BC-CfE on numerous initiatives over the years, and we are pleased to expand that relationship with the opening of the addictions clinic, Connections, and our eye clinic," said Dr. Patricia Daly, vice-president, public health and chief medical health officer, Vancouver Coastal Health. "We strongly believe that together we can make a significant difference in addressing the overlapping health challenges of HIV, addictions and viral hepatitis."

To learn more about the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, please visit: www.cfenet.ubc.ca



» The construction activity taking place in the Downtown Eastside, coupled with current federal legislation criminalizing sex work, makes working conditions more unsafe and contributes to the displacement of trans sex workers.

— Dr. Tara Lyons, BC-CfE Research Scientist with the Gender & Sexual Health Initiative

Read more: bit.ly/AESHAVanstudy



New Canadian online study of cannabis dispensary users set to launch

With the Canadian federal government planning to introduce a new system for legal cannabis use by adult Canadians, researchers from the British Columbia Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), a part of the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), are launching an innovative new study which aims to fill a crucial knowledge gap: How do Canadians use cannabis?

“How adults use cannabis for medical and non-medical purposes has never been fully researched in Canada,” said Dr. M-J Milloy, a research scientist at the BC-CfE and an assistant professor at the University of British Columbia. “Our study aims to generate detailed evidence on cannabis use to help inform the creation of a new public health framework, guide its monitoring, and evaluate the harms and benefits of legal cannabis.”

Now recruiting participants, the Vancouver Cannabis Dispensary Users Study is the first study in Canada aimed at gathering data from individuals representing the full spectrum of cannabis use, including medical, non-medical, problematic and non-problematic use. Researchers aim to recruit over 1,000 adult cannabis users who access cannabis from retail dispensaries in the City of Vancouver. Participants will complete an anonymous online survey detailing their cannabis use behaviours, beliefs, reasons for use, perceived benefits and harms (e.g. cannabis dependence, intoxicated driving, etc.). Participants will also be asked to provide detailed data on their preferences for cannabis access in the pending legalized system.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in the world. In Canada, approximately 10 per cent of adults

(or three million Canadians) are estimated to have used cannabis during the past 12 months. The federal government’s plan to legalize and regulate cannabis production, distribution and use by adults for medical and non-medical purposes will be the most far-reaching reform to regulating substance use in decades. There is a broad consensus among experts and

polymakers that cannabis legalization requires active monitoring and careful evaluation in order to maximize possible benefits and lessen possible negative impacts.

At present, there exists very little detailed data on cannabis use by Canadians. Although past studies have estimated the number of Canadians who use cannabis, other key numbers such as rates of cannabis dependence and risk factors for experiencing cannabis-related harms, have not been well researched. Other questions, including medical and non-medical reasons for cannabis use and patterns and preferences

for accessing legal cannabis, are also unanswered. The Vancouver Cannabis Dispensary Users Study is a first step to answering these and other related questions.

“Vancouver cannabis retail dispensaries provide an ideal setting to start gathering data on these matters and have great potential to advance our cannabis use health-related knowledge,” said Dr. Milloy. “We hope to expand our understanding of the use of cannabis by dispensary customers and support evidence-based strategies and policies that promote a healthier future for all Canadians.”

For more information about the study, please visit www.cfenet.ubc.ca/research/vancan



CASE STUDY

With support from STOP HIV/AIDS® team, client reaches undetectable viral load

Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV/AIDS (STOP HIV/AIDS®), a program conceptualized by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE), aims to expand access to HIV treatment, care and medications among hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations. The STOP Outreach Team involves collaboration between nurses, health care professionals, social workers and others in order to provide for the broad spectrum of needs of their clients living with HIV. In 2012, based on its success, the BC provincial government announced \$19.9 million in funding for the provincial Health Authorities towards the program’s growth.

STOP Outreach Team members across the province work with vulnerable populations who have suffered trauma and lack trust in traditional health care systems. Many of their clients are simultaneously facing addiction and homelessness problems, while dealing with access to HIV treatment and care. STOP Outreach Nurses work with approximately 35-40 clients at a time.

The success stories from the STOP program show the resilience that exists within vulnerable communities, as well as the importance of holistic support systems to address a broad spectrum of health, social and economic needs.

This case study provides an example of a success story. A client, through the services provided by the STOP Outreach Team, was able to achieve stability and improved health. The client’s name has been changed for privacy concerns.

“Ross” met with the STOP Outreach Team in Vancouver while at a STOP Team HIV testing event in March 2012. At intake, the 40-year-old individual’s CD4 counts were alarmingly low at <10 and his viral load measured at over 200,000/mL. Ross struggled with severe opioid and methamphetamine IV addiction, required support with food security and housing, and faced multiple challenges to restarting his HIV antiretroviral medications (ART).

The program STOP Outreach Team in Vancouver, under Vancouver Coastal Health, supported Ross in getting into three different residences and placed in several shelters. However, he faced multiple evictions and incarcerations. He was connected to the John Ruedy Immunodeficiency Clinic (IDC) at St. Paul’s Hospital. There, he re-started methadone treatment and became engaged in his medical care. He also became a member of The Dr. Peter’s Centre Day Health Program for meals and additional nursing support.

During this time, the client struggled and was on and off methadone. He failed many attempts to restart HIV treatment. He required a significant amount of support to stay on methadone, as he would lose his dosing prescription on the way from the clinic to the pharmacy. He had multiple hospital admissions in relation to AIDS-related illnesses and often left the hospital against medical advice.

In addition to these physical health issues, he struggled with suicidal ideation and hopelessness. He required a great deal of support to accomplish day-to-day tasks as his life was very chaotic and he was often intoxicated.

A turning point finally came in 2015 when Ross became stabilized at a detox centre, after many failed attempts at detox over the years. He then restarted on ART and was transferred to a treatment centre. He eventually left the treatment centre after facing stigma and abuse due to his HIV status. The STOP staff supported and encouraged Ross to reintegrate into the centre. He returned and completed his treatment program before moving into a recovery house.

Ross eventually moved to independent sober housing and began attending appointments independently. His CD4 count increased to 150 and his viral load reached undetectable levels, making likelihood of transmission negligible.

At this time, Ross hopes to become a mentor to assist others in facing their addiction and in growing towards wellness.

Medicine and Healing: Science and Psychedelics



On February 8, 2017, the BC-CfE’s BC Centre on Substance Use will welcome invited guest Dr. Gabor Maté for his lecture “Medicine and Healing: Science and Psychedelics.” Dr. Maté is a renowned speaker and Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University. His lecture will be the first in a series of Public Seminars hosted by the BCCSU aimed at

delivering the latest research and information on novel, evidence-based addiction medicine topics.

For more information about Dr. Maté go to www.drgabormate.com.

LECTURES & EVENTS

What’s New in Addiction Medicine?

TBA

Speaker: Dr. Prabh Lail

Tuesday, February 28, 2017, 12–1PM

Hurlburt Auditorium (2nd floor), St. Paul’s Hospital

Forefront Lecture

Ageing and HIV: Insights from the Veterans Aging Cohort Study (VACS)

Speaker: Dr. Amy Justice

Thursday, February 9, 2017, 4–5PM

Hurlburt Auditorium (2nd floor), St. Paul’s Hospital

HIV Care Rounds

Incorporating drug levels into HIV care

Speaker: Dr. Richard Harrigan

Thursday, February 9, 2017, 8–9AM

Conference Room 7, Providence Level 1, St. Paul’s Hospital

Reproductive health of HIV+ women

Speaker: Dr. Melanie Murray

Thursday, February 23, 2017, 8–9AM

Conference Room 7, Providence Level 1, St. Paul’s Hospital

For more information, contact us at Education@cfenet.ubc.ca or visit our website at www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca

BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- > Improve the health of British Columbians with HIV through comprehensive research and treatment programs;
- > Develop cost-effective research and therapeutic protocols;
- > Provide educational support programs to health-care professionals;
- > Monitor the impact of HIV/AIDS on B.C. and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of HIV-related programs.

Physician Drug Hotline
1.800.665.7677

St. Paul’s Hospital Pharmacy Hotline
1.888.511.6222

Website
www.cfenet.ubc.ca

E-mail
info@cfenet.ubc.ca

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