
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Health

Province funds world-class research centre to improve addictions care in B.C.

VANCOUVER – Today Health Minister Terry Lake announced \$5 million of additional funding for the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), as well as \$1.9 million in ongoing funding to support the centre’s operations.

A private donor has also stepped forward with a generous \$1-million initial donation through St. Paul’s Foundation, launching further fundraising efforts to support the centre’s important work.

“The BCCSU is already establishing itself as a world-class research centre, and has begun developing recommendations, resources and training that will help us improve the care and treatments for people struggling with substance use issues,” said Lake. “This additional funding will help boost our efforts in responding to the overdose crisis but also set a course for best practice over the long term and for all addictions.”

The Province also announced funding of \$5 million in September 2016 to establish the BC Centre on Substance Use. The work of the centre – the first of its kind in Canada – is focused on education and training, research and evaluation, and clinical care guidance related to problematic substance use - such as treatment guidelines for opioid addiction released today. The centre has established a network of clinicians, educators and researchers from across the province aimed at strengthening the provincial system of care for people struggling with problematic substance use.

“I know that the families and patients we work with are extremely grateful for the ongoing support from the Province to help create a focused centre with a mandate to put forward best evidence for substance use prevention, treatment and care,” said Dr. Evan Wood, BCCSU director. “Through collaboration, we will demonstrate how effective a provincial response can be when science and best evidence are integrated into care.”

The provincial funding is being augmented by a \$1-million donation over five years provided by initiating donor Peter Bull. Bull is president of P.M. Bull & Company and Blenheim Realty, and a director on the Providence Health Care Board. The donation also marks the start of ongoing fundraising for the BCCSU by St. Paul’s Foundation.

“We know that Dr. Wood and his team are on the leading edge of new medically targeted treatments for substance use disorders, and the BCCSU needs more resources to be as effective as possible, as soon as possible,” said Bull. “We as a community need to step in, because we can really make a difference. So I have committed \$1 million to help, and I have also pledged to raise \$4 million more with St. Paul’s Foundation. I invite the community to join me in supporting the BCCSU’s critical work.”

As part of its early work, and released today, the BCCSU has developed a clinical treatment guideline for opioid use disorder for B.C. physicians and nurse practitioners. The guideline will come into effect as of June 5, 2017, replacing the existing methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone guideline developed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC.

The BCCSU will also develop a robust set of supports for the provincial health system to address opioid and other substance use disorders. This will include overseeing training and monitoring of opioid substitution treatment prescribers, which the college has done successfully since the program was established in 1996. At the same time, the college will enhance its focus on monitoring opioid prescriptions and other medications at risk of diversion or non-medical use. The BCCSU's new role will support the implementation of best practices across the addiction treatment continuum, from acute care through to recovery, as well as routine health system monitoring and evaluation in this area.

Since Oct. 1, 2016, the BCCSU has hosted six training sessions throughout the province with more than 550 health-care providers on how to treat patients who struggle with opioid addiction. Over that period, it has also hosted several provincial community engagement sessions with provincial groups representing people who use drugs, people in recovery and families affected by drug use and overdoses.

Dr. Evan Wood has been appointed director of the BCCSU. A co-author of more than 400 scientific papers, he brings years of experience in the area of evidence-based addiction research, education and care. He is a professor of medicine at the University of British Columbia where he holds a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair; a diplomat of the American Board of Addiction Medicine; a principal investigator of the Canadian Research Initiative on Substance Misuse, a federally funded national research consortium, and the principal investigator of a U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse funded research-training program.

The work of the BCCSU will complement the Province's measures supporting the overdose crisis response. As part of the response, law enforcement is working at all levels of government to interdict the supply of toxic drugs, and health officials are working to address the immediate and longer-term health needs. To that end, B.C. is expanding access to life-saving naloxone, supervised consumption services, and opioid addiction treatment medications and services, as well as improving the effectiveness of addiction treatment and access to appropriate substance use supports.

Learn More:

To read the Guideline for the Clinical Management of Opioid Use Disorder, please visit: <http://bccsu.ca/care-guidance-publications/>

To learn more about the BC Centre on Substance Use, please visit: www.bccsu.ca

To support St. Paul's Foundation's fundraising efforts for BCCSU, please visit: www.helpstpauls.com/BCCSU

A backgrounder follows.

Media Contacts:

Ministry of Health Communications
250 952-1887 (media line)

Diane Pépin
Communications Coordinator
BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
Work: (604) 682-2344 ext. 66314
Cell: (604) 653-5673

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BACKGROUND

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The BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU)

The BCCSU is a new provincial resource, based at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, which will host a provincial network of clinicians, educators and researchers aimed at developing and strengthening the provincial system of care for people struggling with problematic substance use. The network will also include policy makers and people who use substances, family advocates, support groups and the recovery community.

The BCCSU is the first of its kind in Canada, focused on addiction research, education and care guidance, and networking with addictions experts throughout the province. It positions B.C. as a leader in establishing evidenced-based addiction treatment and care. Dr. Evan Wood has been appointed as BCCSU director.

In consultation with communities, the BCCSU identified three priority areas to strengthen B.C.'s addiction systems:

- Increasing understanding and use of evidence-based treatments for addiction;
- Strengthening education and training of health-care providers; and
- Developing clinical guidelines as well as monitoring and evaluation across the addiction care continuum, which includes acute hospital care, residential treatment, withdrawal management, recovery services, outpatient treatment and other services in the community.

The BCCSU will address these three key areas by:

- Improving access to evidence-based care by providing training for health-care providers at all stages of their careers;
- Expanding evidence through research, evaluation and continuous quality improvement to increase knowledge of evidence-based treatments to influence clinical care, health service delivery and policy; and,
- Increasing the delivery of evidence-based care through the development and implementation of clinical guidelines, including increased uptake of evidence-based medication therapy, recovery services and psychosocial treatment interventions, improved patient and family experience of care and improved clinical outcomes.

In the face of the province's overdose crisis, the BCCSU developed a clinical guideline for the treatment of opioid use disorder. The guideline includes education and clinical guidance for physicians and nurse practitioners on the most-effective treatment options for opioid addiction, including buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone) and methadone.

The BCCSU will develop and maintain additional provincial treatment guidelines for a range of substance use disorders, as well as help develop best practices for health authorities and

establish educational and quality-improvement initiatives.

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