

CSAM 2011 NEWS

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS FOR Nov 6/11

Marijuana Debate Captures Attention

For the first time in CSAMs history, a debate the pitted two heavy hitters in the THC arena against each other was scheduled for the last day of CSAM's 2011 Scientific Conference. Each was asked to debate the merits of both medicinal cannabinoids and inhaled THC across a wide variety of conditions. While there was general agreement that more research was needed with respect to the merits of inhaled THC, it was clear that the two experts differed in their perspectives. Dr Ware argued that "Absence of evidence was not evidence of absence" and suggested that it is difficult to ignore the anecdotal claims from patients in respect of the beneficial effects of inhaled marijuana. Dr. Khasala countered with a more tempered approach, citing the Governments unwillingness to fund such research made supporting the use of inhaled preparations difficult. Each debater called for the need for private funding to become available. Of particular interest was the polarized merits of THC preparations on body versus mind. While seemingly beneficial for ailments below the neck, great caution was advised by both experts in respect of the negative psychological impact, especially on the developing brain of adolescents. Dr. Ware appropriately drew the parallel to the developing fetus, stating that the growing brain of adolescence should not be expose to any illicit chemicals for fear of negatively impacting healthy development. In all, the debate captured much interest and will certainly be a feature of CSAM conference for years to come .



Dr. Marc Ware and Dr. Jag Khalsa (with moderator: Dr. Paul Sobey) debate the merits of both inhaled and pharmacological THC preparations.

Name Badges used at this year's conference helped support *Kidzpositive*, an organization started by health care providers to enable HIV positive mothers in South Africa support themselves and their children. The beaded lanyards can be used for eyeglass after.



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Pain Guidelines

Dr. Lisa Bromley of Ottawa, Ontario was called to travel across the Country to present the recent Canadian Opioid Guidelines, a long awaited document that calls for the safe prescribing of opioids for non-cancer pain. There was no question that these practice guidelines come at a very timely juncture in the history of escalating prescription opioid abuse. In essence, they call on physicians to clearly identify pain syndromes from addictive disorder in order to properly match patients with appropriate therapy. While the Guidelines do not impose ceiling doses, they do call for careful dose titration with stop points whereby the physician should reassess the analgesic requirements. A watchful eye on aberrant behaviour is the key and there is a clear need for cross training between physicians treating pain and those treating addictions.



Policy Analysts discuss MMTP

CSAM organizers were very pleased when invited policy analyst, Janine Luce from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and Beverley Clarke, Chair of the Canadian Council on Addictions (CECA), accepted an offer to present their findings from a recent paper on MMT Policy Developments across Canada. This fit in nicely with CSAM conference theme and clearly pointed out the inequities in care models across our nation. A clear need for a more coordinated national treatment strategy that improved access and promoted retention in programs was identified. The above talk was then paired with an equally insightful review of the British Columbia Methadone Program by Senior Analyst Mr. Dan Reist from the Centre of Addictions Research, University of Victoria (CARBC). He clearly elucidated trends for decreased treatment retention when examined against optimal dosing and perhaps more strict treatment guidelines in respect of take-home or carry doses. At the end of the session, concerns from audience participants were raised in respect the unequal distribution of services across the country and called for further exposition of the issues in order to raise awareness at the Government level.



Ms. Janin Luce and Ms. Beverly Clark

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