



NEWS

VICTORIAN ALCOHOL & DRUG ASSOCIATION

October 2006

ENEWS – daily electronic news, views and drug information
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ANEX Australasian Methamphetamine Conference

The first Australasian Methamphetamine Conference was held at the Sydney Convention Centre at Darling Harbour. The conference was also this year's Anex Harm Reduction Conference. The conference was opened by the Hon. Christopher Pyne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing) and the Hon. John Hatzistergos (NSW Minister for Health).

Minister Hatzistergos opened the conference with the key message from his government that there is "No such thing as the safe use of psychostimulant drugs." This was a point that would be debated heavily over the following two days.

Highlights of the conference were:

- The keynote address on the opening day given by Professor Ernest Drucker from USA's Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York City. Prof Drucker reminded the audiences that most people down regulate their drug use as they age, without any intervention. He argued for strong harm reduction responses.
- A number of papers, including Jeremy Douglas' from the UNODC, provided a perspective of how Australia's use compares with the rest of Asia. Australia's use of Amphetamine Type Substances (ATS) has plateaued after peaking in the late 1990's, whereas much of Asia's continues to increase.
- Anne Roche and Steve Allsop argued for improved Workplace interventions. People in the paid workforce are much more likely to use illicit drugs than those not in the workforce. They noted that when drug use increases in the general community it also increases in the workforce.
- There was discussion at the conference around the need for a pharmacotherapeutic response to treat problematic ATS use.

Dr Nick Lintzeris reminded the audience that the key issues around amphetamine withdrawal are anxiety, depression and psychosis. Currently there exist a number of successful treatments for these conditions so clinicians shouldn't be discouraged by the lack of a current agonist response. Several papers also reported the success of counseling responses for managing ongoing cravings in ATS withdrawals.

- Dr Ingrid Van Beek from Sydney's Supervised Injecting Facility acknowledged that with increased use of ATS that there are increased problems with aggression and psychosis in facilities such as NSPs. She argued that services have a duty of care, both to clients and the community, to manage the issues that arise in them. She continued that simply barring clients only increases the impact on the community and outlined delirium protocols her service had developed in partnership with the local psychiatric service to address the needs of their clients.

Anex conferences always bring together a very diverse audience of policy makers, treatment professionals and users groups. A constant sense of crisis and doom emanated from policy makers and law enforcement which was repeatedly challenged by the various drug users peaks from around the country.

One of the challenges facing the conveners of a substance specific conference is that there is often little context. On many occasions when statistics about amphetamine related injuries were provided audience members would ask for comparative figures around alcohol. All in all the conference was a great opportunity to debate the issues of methamphetamine use in Australia. Congratulations John and all at Anex on a successful conference. **VAADA would like to thank VAADA Board member Simon Ruth for his comprehensive conference report.**

Month in Review

VAADA Annual General Meeting

VAADA will be hosting its 2006 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday, 24 October, from 5.30pm to 6.30pm at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, 131 Lonsdale Street Melbourne.

The AGM will also be an opportunity for VAADA to celebrate its 25th Birthday and we would warmly encourage past and present members to attend.

This year (4) board positions will fall vacant. These positions will be available for nomination by VAADA members.

Guest speaker at the AGM is Dr Neil Blewett (President of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia) who will present 'Reflecting on the Past; Planning for the Future'

RSVPs for the AGM can be directed to Chris on 9416 0899 or at cmcdonnell@vaada.org.au

VAADA Staff Changes

Jason Rostant has recently resigned as VAADA Policy Officer and will finish on Friday 13th October to begin a new role as Community Educator at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. He has enjoyed his time at VAADA, which has been both challenging and rewarding, and looks forward to continued connection with the AOD sector into the future as part of his new role.

VAADA is taking steps to ensure continuity within the organisation and will be advertising the Policy Officer vacancy in the very near future. Watch this space.

VAADA Administrative Officer Sarah Keogh has also moved on to a new role at the Youth and Substance Abuse Service.

VAADA Victorian Election Resources

The Victorian 2006 state election is to be held on Saturday 25 November 2006. The VAADA Board met in January 2006 to identify key campaign priorities for the 2006 State Election.

In setting these priorities, the Board acknowledged that all too often AOD use issues tend to exist at the margins of political debate - especially during election campaigns. VAADA has developed a package of resources for AOD agencies, service users, families, and communities with an interest in AOD issues to use in the forthcoming election campaign.

It is designed as a way of focussing on a select range of issues. It is hoped that during the campaign that the awareness of politicians is raised in relation to the health and welfare implications arising from AOD use. Notably, arriving at an accurate appraisal of the health costs associated with substance (mis)use in the Victorian community.

Given the broad range of issues confronting AOD users and their families, selecting key issues to highlight during the election campaign was a difficult task. Within this context four key messages were chosen by the Board.

1) Improved responses to people experiencing harms associated with AOD through more effective cross-sector partnerships. This point recognises the complexity of AOD issues and that effective responses require viable cross-sectoral collaborations.

2) Implications of substance (mis)use on families – treatment and support options. This message acknowledges that the outcomes from drug (mis)use aren't confined to the individual yet tends to be dealt with in isolation from broader family.

3) Access to adequate healthcare for people experiencing harms associated with AOD issues. This point acknowledges that stigma and discrimination inhibit those with problematic AOD use from having adequate access to universal healthcare.

4) Emerging issues in AOD sector. This message highlights that often in planning responses to emerging AOD issues, planners are reactive rather than strategic, it aims to foster a strategic rather than crisis driven approach to emerging issues.

As a result of consistent feedback from the Regional Voices consultations undertaken by VAADA during 2006, and through VAADA's involvement in a range of other forums, these initial priority focus areas have been further refined and expanded upon. Information sheets on the following issues are available at www.vaada.org.au.

- Drugs, prisons and crime
- Access to withdrawal and rehabilitation services
- Family access to drug treatment
- Needs of older AOD users
- Links between AOD use, social disadvantage and health

YOUR SAY

The Healthy Liver Clinic at Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre Jenny Kelsall - Peer Support Worker VIVAIDS - Attached to the Healthy Live Clinic

Despite significant improvements in treatment for hepatitis C in recent years, few drug users access treatment and many remain unaware of the treatment options available to them and their effectiveness in treating Hepatitis C.

In addition, there has been little integration (to date) between the alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector and the infectious diseases (ID) sector. As a result, drug and alcohol clinicians are often unfamiliar with Blood Borne Virus (BBV) therapies such as antiviral treatment for hepatitis C. Conversely, infectious disease clinicians are largely unaccustomed to working with drug users – the issues that they face or the treatment options that are available to those seeking them.

Here we report on the recently established 'Healthy Liver Clinic' (HLC), a 'one stop shop' model of service provision which combines on-site treatment for substance use with treatment for hepatitis C. The HLC, which compliments existing clinical services at Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre (TP) in Fitzroy, signifies the AOD sector's increasing acknowledgement of its role in supporting clients, many of whom are living with hepatitis C, to access HCV monitoring and treatment.

After an initial implementation period, the HLC began seeing clients in April 2006. Clinical staffs at the Healthy Liver Clinic are specialist AOD clinicians as well as accredited to prescribe medication for the treatment of hepatitis C. The clinic also has access to infectious disease clinicians and gastroenterologists from nearby hospitals who fulfill a specialist consultancy role.

The HLC emphasises effective management and support that facilitates the uptake of HCV therapy, rather than simply implementing barriers that exclude potential candidates from treatment. The peer support worker, who is also part of the clinic team, is employed by VIVAIDS, the Victorian drug user organization. The peer support worker provides ongoing support and information for those accessing the clinic, during all stages of client monitoring and/or treatment. The peer worker's role also extends to addressing *practical* barriers to the uptake of treatment and care, e.g. providing transport to and from clinic appointments.

VIVAIDS involvement, which is a key feature of the HLC model, ensures ongoing user input and focuses on consumer perspectives.

HLC clients have access to a wide range of services provided on site at Turning Point including:

- Testing and serology
- Pre & post test counselling
- Hepatitis C monitoring and treatment
- Immunisation for hepatitis A & B
- Treatment for substance use including pharmacotherapy (i.e. methadone, buprenorphine & suboxone)
- An onsite pharmacy
- Counselling with A&D clinicians and/or psychiatrists/psychologists
- A Needle/Syringe Program
- Peer-based information, education & support

In the HLC's six months of operation, a total of 45 clients have been screened for hepatitis A, B and C. Eleven clients are currently receiving antiviral treatment for hepatitis C (Interferon and Ribavirin) and a further 3 clients have completed screening and are about to commence treatment. Another group of 15 clients are in the process of screening with a view to starting treatment in the near future.

We assumed that the HLC would draw the majority of its clients from the large pool of drug users who already attend TP for pharmacotherapy and other drug treatment programs. Interestingly, many clients have just *arrived* at the clinic! Word has traveled fast it seems, and clients report hearing about the HLC 'on the street', and from friends and other users. And the clients keep on coming!

The Healthy Liver Clinic indicates that drug users *will* access treatment for hepatitis C if it is provided in an inclusive, supportive and non-judgmental environment.

The clients who attend the HLC consistently disprove the stereotype which has insisted for so long that users are disinterested in their own health, difficult to treat and non-compliant. Although it is early days, at this stage not one client has dropped out of treatment prematurely.

Calendar of Events

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| October 13 | Talking Point Seminar – Alcohol Related Harm Across Victorian Local Government Areas: A Suburb by Suburb, Town by Town Analysis Presented by Dr Anne-Marie Laslett. 1-2 pm, 142 Gertrude St, Fitzroy. The seminar is free. All welcome, bookings essential, ring 8413 8413 or email info@turningpoint.org.au |
| October 16 | Cognitive Behavioural and Solution-focused Approaches to Working with Anxious and Depressed Young People and their Families TRANX /PADA training, 9.30-4.30pm, at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment centre corner St Georges Road and Bell Street, Preston All full day workshops are \$190.00, for more information or to register contact Anne Smarrelli on 9886 0955. |
| October 17 | An Introduction To Alcohol Related Brain Impairment (Arbi) -Module 1 Strategies For Working With A Person With Arbi ARBIAS - Module 2 Professional Training Program Module 1 and 2: Day One, Tuesday October 17th 2006, 9.15am to 4.30pm Training for front line and middle managers Module 1 and 2: Day One, Tuesday October 17th 2006, 9.15am to 4.30pm. Location: Martin Jackson Training Room, 27 Hope Street Brunswick. Fee: \$230 per day –GST inclusive (2 modules) For further enquiries please telephone Michelle Barry, Administration Services at arbias Ltd on (03) 8388 1222 |
| October 17 | Working with the aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Women’s Alcohol & Drug Service Training. This session will introduce key organisations in Aboriginal Health and discuss programs issues, care and research within the Victorian Aboriginal community. The will be held at The Royal Women’s Hospital Supper room (Basement) 132 Grattan Street (main entry) Carlton 3053. To book or for more information please call on 9344 3631 or email at womens.ads@rwh.org.au |
| October 20 | Psychological Treatment of Depression: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy as Integral Elements of a Comprehensive Treatment Program TRANX /PADA training, 9.30-4.30pm, at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment centre corner St Georges Road and Bell Street, Preston All full day workshops are \$190.00, for more information or to register contact Anne Smarrelli on 9886 0955. |
| October 24 | VAADA Annual General Meeting VAADA will be hosting its 2006 Annual General Meeting from 5.30pm to 7.30pm on Tuesday, 24 th October at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, 131 Lonsdale Street Melbourne. A guest presentation will be delivered by Dr Neal Blewett AC (President Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia - ADCA). RSVP’s close on the 19 October and can be directed to Chris on 9416 0866 or at cmcdonnell@vaada.org.au . |
| October 24 | Working With People With ARBI and Challenging Behaviour - Module 3 Working With People With ARBI Who Have Complex Needs - Module 4 Professional Training Program Module 3 and 4, Tuesday October 24 th 2006, 9.15am to 4.30pm. Location: Martin Jackson Training Room, 27 Hope Street Brunswick. Fee: \$230 per day –GST inclusive (2 modules) For further enquiries please telephone Michelle Barry, Administration Services at arbias Ltd on (03) 8388 1222 |
| October 27 | The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Clinical Practice: Counteracting the Negative Effects of Compassion Fatigue, Fear and Burn-Out – Moreland Hall Seminar Series 12.30 – 1.30pm A narrative seminar highlighting the challenges of providing AOD treatment to adolescents presenting with histories of trauma, abuse and neglect, with particular reference to strategies used to develop ‘resilience. Presented by John Quiroga, Alcohol and Drug Youth Consultant, Moreland Hall. Seminars will be held Moreland Hall, 26 Jessie Street Moreland. For further enquiries please call 03 9386 2876 or email seminarseries@moreland hall.org |
| November 1 | Managing and understanding the role of psychotropic (mood altering) medications in the therapeutic relationship. TRANX/PADA training 9.30am – 4.30pm at the Kingston Arts Centre, 979 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin. All full day workshops are \$190.00, for more information or to register contact Anne Smarrelli on 9886 0955. |