

GIRLS' CANNABIS USE CATCHES UP, BUT MALES STILL THE HEAVIEST CASUALTIES

- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

A recently published bulletin by the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) has de-bunked a commonly held myth that teenage boys and girls are surely from 'different planets', at least when it relates to their patterns of recent cannabis use.

When it comes to cannabis-related problems however, it seems certain gender patterns continue to ring true, with males far more likely to present to emergency departments for cannabis-related problems, particularly in regards to their mental health.

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre is based at the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Despite cannabis remaining the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia, rates of recent cannabis use (in the last 12 months), among 14 to 39-year-olds have continued to decline since 1998.

Interestingly however, the past gender differences in rates of recent cannabis use among 14 to 19-year-olds have largely disappeared, with girls now having caught up to boys. This convergence mimics the trends observed for tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption and is a phenomenon in need of further exploration.

This NCPIC Bulletin also examines cannabis-related presentations arriving at emergency departments in two Sydney hospitals between 2004 and 2006. The findings show that males represented by far, the greatest proportion of patients, at 72.5 per cent.

Although the number of cannabis-related presentations only represented 0.3% of the total presentations the Director of NCPIC, Professor Jan Copeland, believed that this is something that we cannot ignore.

“This is the first study to explore the types of problems associated with cannabis-related presentations to accident and emergency departments,” said Professor Copeland. “While the rates are low, it is likely to seriously under-represent the rate of cannabis in A&E presentations as it is not routinely assessed or suspected.”

ends

Contact Details: Paul Dillon, tel. 9385 0226 or 0419 402 099, email p.dillon@unsw.edu.au

Clare Chenoweth, tel. 9385 0218, email c.chenoweth@unsw.edu.au

Date Issued: July 30, 2008