

ncpic e-zine

february 2009

national cannabis prevention and information centre

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what's new in cannabis?

NCPIC short film competition results

The winning entries of the 2008 NCPIC Short Film Competition will be launched on the website in March, in addition to appearing on NCPIC's very own YouTube channel. The winning entry, *It's Not Funny*, impressed the judging panel with its slick editing and succinct message, all achieved in less than a minute! Check the Competitions page on the website in mid March to view these creative and quite diverse short films.

Our 2009 Short Film and Poster Competitions will also launch in March. The flyers shown here, along with the entry forms, will soon be available to download from the website.

director's report

Jan Copeland (PhD)
(Professor/Director, NCPIC)

February was a busy month at NCPIC, with preparations for a national radio advertising campaign to promote the Cannabis Information and Helpline underway and a participant recruitment strategy about to be launched for Dr Desiree Boughtwood's mail-based cannabis treatment study.

The upcoming radio advertising campaign will feature three, 30 second scripts, with a target market of parents and concerned friends or family of cannabis users. One of the main objectives of this campaign is to promote the Helpline as a place to seek information and/or advice and raise awareness that this free, nationally available service exists. We hope that through this national, appropriately targeted approach, the Helpline will become a well-known and well-utilised resource for the Australian community. The radio ads will air from March to June this year.

The NCPIC Communications team has also been assisting with recruitment for the mail intervention study. Some of the initiatives include a collaborative feature with the Sutherland Cannabis Clinic in the Sunday Telegraph, presentations by the training team and posts on drug and alcohol electronic updates. One of the major aims of the mail intervention is to make treatment accessible for those living in remote areas where there are very limited health services available and significant cannabis problems. Therefore, recruitment will be via rural community and drop in services, as well as extensive promotion in rural newspapers.

NCPIC aims to ensure that its services and resources are as widely available as possible in the community, and through these two activities, we hope to reach people who would otherwise not know about us or be able to easily access our services. Thus, through providing a free, nationally available helpline and trialling our new, mail-based cannabis treatment study, we are reaching out to areas of the community which have otherwise lacked access to such essential services.



national cannabis prevention and information centre (ncpic)

short film competition

closing date: All entries must be received by 29 October 2009 and be accompanied by an entry form

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) Short Film Competition gives young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years the opportunity to showcase their creative talent and express their thoughts and ideas about cannabis and its impact upon young people and their relationships.

prize money
There will be one national winner and two runners-up. The winner will receive a prize of \$5,000 and the runners-up will receive a prize of \$2,000 each.

brief
The film can be in any style or genre (i.e. drama, comedy, documentary, science-fiction, etc.), but must creatively explore the issues associated with how the use of cannabis may impact on relationships. Issues that could be explored may include fights with your boyfriend/girlfriend, being late for work, problems with family members, etc.

To see last year's winning entry and the runner ups go to: ncpic.org.au/ncpic/news/competitions/short-film

ncpic
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conditions of entry:

- All entries must be original and submitted in digital format (i.e. mp4 or mov).
- All entries must be received by 29 October 2009.
- All entries must be accompanied by an entry form.
- All entries must be submitted to the NCPIC Short Film Competition, PO Box 100, Canberra ACT 2601.
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national cannabis prevention and information centre (ncpic)

poster competition

closing date: All entries must be received by 28 July 2009 and be accompanied by an entry form

The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC) Poster Competition gives secondary school students between the ages of 12 and 18 years the opportunity to showcase their creative talent and express their thoughts and ideas about cannabis and its impact upon young people and their relationships.

brief
Students from secondary schools across Australia are invited to design a poster to increase young people's understanding of how the use of cannabis may impact on relationships. Issues that could be explored may include fights with your boyfriend/girlfriend or problems with parents or teachers, etc.

prize money
There will be one national winner and two runners-up. The winner will receive a prize of \$5,000 and the runners-up will receive a prize of \$2,000 each.

To see last year's winning entry and the runner ups go to: ncpic.org.au/ncpic/news/competitions/poster

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conditions of entry:

- All entries must be original and submitted in digital format (i.e. pdf or eps).
- All entries must be received by 28 July 2009.
- All entries must be accompanied by an entry form.
- All entries must be submitted to the NCPIC Poster Competition, PO Box 100, Canberra ACT 2601.
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research publications

Relevant publications examining issues to do with cannabis that have been published in the last month include the following:

- Bossong, M.G., van Berckel, B.N., Boellaard, R., Zuurman, L., Schuit, R.C., Windhorst, A.D., van Gerven, J.M., Ramsey, N.F., Lammertsma, A.A., & Kahn, R.S.** (2009). Delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol induces dopamine release in the human striatum. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 34, 759-766.
- Brook, J.S., Zhang, C., Koppel, J., & Brook, D.W.** (2008). Pathways from earlier marijuana use in the familial and non-familial environments to self-marijuana use in the fourth decade of life. *American Journal on Addictions* 17, 497-503.
- Chabrol, H. & Saint-Martin, C.** (2009). Cannabis use and delinquent behaviors in high-school students. *Addictive Behaviors* 34, 187-189.
- Ellis, R.J., Toperoff, W., Vaida, F., van den Brande, G., Gonzales, J., Gouaux, B., Bentley, H., & Atkinson, J.H.** (2009). Smoked medicinal cannabis for neuropathic pain in HIV: A randomized, crossover clinical trial. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 34, 672-680.
- Gmel, G., Kuendig, H., Rehm, J., Schreyer, N., & Daeppen, J.B.** (2009). Alcohol and cannabis use as risk factors for injury – a case-crossover analysis in a Swiss hospital emergency department. *BMC Public Health* 9, 40.
- Gray, K.M., LaRowe, S.D. & Upadhyaya, H.P.** (2008). Cue reactivity in young marijuana smokers: A preliminary investigation. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours* 22, 582-586.
- Hartman, C.A., Gelhorn, H., Crowley, T.J., Sakai, J.T., Stallings, M., Young, S.E., Rhee, S.H., Corley, R., Hewitt, J.K., & Hopfer, C.J.** (2008). Item response theory analysis of DSM-IV cannabis abuse and dependence criteria in adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 47, 165-173.
- Hayatbakhsh, M.R., Najman, J.M., Jamrozik, K., Mamun, A.A., O'Callaghan, M.J., & Williams, G.M.** (2009). Childhood sexual abuse and cannabis use in early adulthood: Findings from an Australian birth cohort study. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 38, 135-142.
- Henquet, C., Rosa, A., Delespaul, P., Papiol, S., Fananás, L., van Os, J., & Myin-Germeys, I.** (2009). COMT ValMet moderation of cannabis-induced psychosis: A momentary assessment study of 'switching on' hallucinations in the flow of daily life. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 119, 156-160.
- Houston, J.E., Murphy, J., Adamson, G., Stringer, M., & Shevlin, M.** (2008). Childhood sexual abuse, early cannabis use, and psychosis: Testing an interaction model based on the National Comorbidity Survey. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 34, 580-585.
- Khazaal, Y., Chatton, A., Cochand, S., & Zullino, D.** (2008). Quality of web-based information on cannabis addiction. *Journal of Drug Education* 38, 97-107.
- Kintz, P., Brunet, B., Muller, J.F., Serra, W., Villain, M., Cirimele, V., & Mura, P.** (2009). Evaluation of the Cozart DDSV test for cannabis in oral fluid. *Therapeutic Drug Monitoring* 31, 131-134.
- Kuntsche, E., Simons-Morton, B., Fotiou, A., ter Bogt, T., Kokkevi, A., & Health Behavior in School-Aged Children Study.** (2009). Decrease in adolescent cannabis use from 2002 to 2006 and links to evenings out with friends in 31 European and North American countries and regions. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 163, 119-125.
- Matthews, A., Bruno, R., Johnston, J., Black, E., Degenhardt, L., & Dunn, M.** (2009). Factors associated with driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs among an Australian sample of regular ecstasy users. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 100, 24-31.
- Melamede, R.** (2009). Parasitic brain infection, endocannabinoids, and schizophrenia. *Medical Hypotheses* 72, 220-222.
- Mennes, C.E., Ben Abdallah, A. & Cottler, L.B.** (2009). The reliability of self-reported cannabis abuse, dependence and withdrawal symptoms: Multisite study of differences between general population and treatment groups. *Addictive Behaviors* 34, 223-226.
- Overney, L.S., Arzy, S. & Blanke, O.** (2009). Deficient mental own-body imagery in a neurological patient with out-of-body experiences due to cannabis use. *Cortex* 45, 228-235.
- Ranney, D.N., Acker, W.B., Al-Holou, S.N., Ehrlichman, L., Lee, D.S., Lewin, S.A., Nguyen, C., Peterson, S.F., Sell, K., Kubus, J., Reid, D., & Englesbe, M.J.** (2009). Marijuana use in potential liver transplant candidates. *American Journal of Transplantation* 9, 280-285.
- Riggs, N.R., Chou, C.P. & Pentz, M.A.** (2009). Protecting against intergenerational problem behavior: Mediation effects of prevented marijuana use on second-generation parent-child relationships and child impulsivity. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 100, 153-160.
- Ruiz-Veguilla, M., Gurpegui, M., Barrigón, M.L., Ferrín, M., Marín, E., Rubio, J.L., Gutiérrez, B., Pintor, A., & Cervilla, J.** (2009). Fewer neurological soft signs among first episode psychosis patients with heavy cannabis use. *Schizophrenia Research* 107, 158-164.
- Schulenberg, J.E. & O'Malley, P.M.** (2009). "Get high with a little help from my friends": Implications of the historical covariation of cannabis use and evenings out. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 163, 183-184.
- Scott, J., Martin, G., Bor, W., Sawyer, M., Clark, J., & McGrath, J.** (2009). The prevalence and correlates of hallucinations in Australian adolescents: Results from a national survey. *Schizophrenia Research* 107, 179-185.
- Skenderian, J.J., Siegel, J.T., Crano, W.D., Alvaro, E.E., & Lac, A.** (2008). Expectancy change and adolescents' intentions to use marijuana. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours* 22, 563-569.
- Van der Kooy, F., Pomahacova, B. & Verpoorte, R.** (2009). Cannabis smoke condensate II: Influence of tobacco on tetrahydrocannabinol levels. *Inhalation Toxicology* 21, 87-90.
- Vaughn, M., Wallace, J., Perron, B., Copeland, V., & Howard, M.** (2008). Does marijuana use serve as a gateway to cigarette use for high-risk African-American youth? *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 34, 782-791.

commentary on research

protecting against intergenerational problem behaviour through prevented cannabis use – a comment on Riggs, Chou & Pentz (2009)

Sally Rooke

While one obvious goal of drug prevention programs is to discourage the initiation and maintenance of drug use, such programs may have indirect effects that extend across long periods of time and beyond the program recipient. Riggs et al¹ proposed a mediational model in which a drug prevention program delivered to adolescents would reduce their cannabis use as parents in adulthood. In turn, cannabis use among parents would be associated with lower parental warmth, higher parental aggression and rejection, and

higher child impulsivity. The authors tested their model through conducting a longitudinal study involving eight matched US schools, with half of the schools being randomly assigned to receive an extensive, evidence-based drug prevention program.

A random selection of participants who had at least one school-age child by the age of 26 were followed up. Consistent with the authors' hypotheses, participants from schools originally assigned to receive the drug prevention program reported significantly lower cannabis use than did participants from the other schools. Further, parental cannabis use was linked with lower parental warmth and higher child impulsivity. There were no associations found between parental cannabis use and parental aggression or rejection.

The study had several limitations, the most notable of which was the high attrition rate; only 257 of 1002 randomly selected participants both met eligibility criteria and provided follow-up data, and participants

who were lost to follow-up reported significantly more cannabis use at baseline than did tracked participants. Further limitations included the lack of objective assessment approaches and the clustered research design.

In spite of these limitations, Riggs and colleagues have conducted a unique, ambitious study that provides valuable information relating to the potential long-term and indirect effects of evidence-based drug prevention programs on adolescents. These effects could have significant implications for the physical and psychological wellbeing of adolescents who receive the intervention and also for the wellbeing of their children in years to come.

1. Riggs, N.R., Chou, C. & Pentz, M.A. (2009). Protecting against intergenerational problem behavior: Mediational effects of prevented marijuana use on second-generation parent-child relationships and child impulsivity. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 100, 153-160.

guest commentary

public opinion on cannabis

Francis Matthew-Simmons

Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP)

Public opinion is an important consideration for policy makers, and the best source of evidence about public opinion is opinion surveys. The Drug Policy Modelling Program (DPMP) recently examined a number of opinion surveys relating to illicit drugs, with the aim of finding out what the Australian public currently thinks about illicit drug use, and how it might have changed over the preceding years. One of the major topics of the research was cannabis, as there have been more surveys conducted about cannabis in Australia than other illicit drugs.

Public attitudes towards cannabis appear to have changed in two major ways since the mid 1990s. Firstly, the number of people who approve of cannabis use has dropped substantially. According to the *National Drug Strategy Household Survey* (NDSHS), around 30

per cent of the Australian population approved of the regular use of cannabis by an adult in 1998. In 2007, this figure has dropped to less than 10 per cent of the population. In addition, nationwide support for cannabis legalisation (allowing for the legal supply of cannabis to adults) has also fallen during the last decade. According to the NDSHS, around one third of all Australians supported the legalisation of cannabis in 1998. In 2007, this has fallen to around 20 per cent of the population.

From these results, it would appear that the Australian public is more concerned with cannabis use than they were ten years ago. What has not changed so much is how Australians would like to see the government tackle the issue. When asked how they would divide government spending in combating cannabis use, between education, treatment, and law enforcement, the Australian public continues to nominate education as its preferred solution, and this has not changed since 1995. On average, the Australian public would like to see around 40 per cent of money

spent tackling cannabis use go towards education, with the remainder evenly split between law enforcement and treatment (in 2004).

Matthew-Simmons, F., Love, S. & Ritter, A. (2008). *Monograph No. 17: A review of Australian public opinion surveys on illicit drugs*. DPMP Monograph Series. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre.



Each issue we will examine some of the cannabis-related stories that have received media attention across the country. The headlines are listed below in bold, with a short summary and/or commentary regarding the content of the news story beneath. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of a particular story, please contact Clare Chenoweth at c.chenoweth@unsw.edu.au.

his spliff is cancer risk

MX Sydney: February 10, 2009

A new study from the US has found that young men who smoke cannabis are “more likely to develop an aggressive form of testicular cancer than those who’ve never tried the drug”. Men who smoke cannabis at least once a week or who have used it regularly since their teenage years are at a doubled risk of a quick-growing form of the cancer, frequently in their 20s or 30s. Using cannabis is believed to “interfere with a man’s natural production of a substance thought to protect against tumours”.

drug-addled boomers the new burden

Herald Sun: February 11, 2009

Increasing, problematic drug use by baby boomers in Victoria has led to the decision to make them the target of the “war on drugs”, with a “special online computer screening” tool to help intervene “when patients show any signs of abuse”. It is stated that “almost three million Australians 40 or older say they have taken illicit drugs at least once in their lives”. Those 45 years or older make up “nearly 20 per cent of clients calling on drug and alcohol treatment services in Victoria”. The 1960s and 1970s, when many baby boomers “came of age”, was a period when “illicit drug use became widespread”, including cannabis, which is noted in the article, to have “extensive effects on brain function”.

sea of addiction full of young men

Campbelltown-Macarthur Advertiser: February 11, 2009

Rehabilitation centre, Odyssey House, has found that “cannabis-related admissions accounted for the largest significant change in illicit drug trends, up by almost 30 per cent from 2007”. There has also been a significant increase in co-existing mental health problems among clients entering the centre, which the increased admissions for cannabis dependence could partly explain. Odyssey House clinical services manager, Sharon Mestern is quoted as saying, “There’s an increased risk of schizophrenia being triggered into action by cannabis use. Often someone already experiencing depression, anxiety and psychosis may use cannabis in an attempt to relieve their symptoms, without realising that cannabis and other illicit drugs can only make matter worse”.

Australians frown on alcohol, smoking and drugs

Australian Medicine: February 16, 2009

This article summarises results from the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: Detailed Findings, such as the fact that “most Australians support policies to reduce alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use”, and that “there is very little public support for legalising illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine and ecstasy”. Dr Paul Meyer, from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says, “Reductions are also the name of the game when it comes to recent use of marijuana – down to 9.1% from around 13% in most previous surveys”.

labor dope laws in sight

West Australian: February 21, 2009

The WA State Government is “forging ahead with plans to repeal Labor’s cannabis laws, with new legislation expected to be introduced into Parliament in the middle of the year”. These include overhauling laws “which allow people caught with up to 30g of cannabis, two plants or a smoking implement to be given an infringement notice rather than face a criminal charge”. Mental Health Minister, Dr Graham Jacobs, said “the Liberals planned to reinstate the cautioning system for possession only and lower the threshold to 10g or less... [as well as introducing] mandatory drug education...and there would be no chances for offenders caught cultivating the drug”. He believes the scheme’s Cannabis Infringement Notice encouraged the community perception that “cannabis was legal and safe”. The Liberals want to ensure cannabis is seen as illegal and harmful. Professor Charles Watson, who lead the committee that reviewed Labor’s legislation has warned that the new laws will take WA drug policy “back to the Dark Ages”.



NCPIC is a consortium led by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and is an Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing initiative

For further information on NCPIC, its work and activities please contact Clare Chenoweth on (02) 9385 0218

Street address:

National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC)
UNSW Randwick Campus
NDARC UNSW
R1 Level 1
22-32 King Street
Randwick NSW 2031

Postal address:

National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre (NCPIC)
PO Box 684
Randwick NSW 2031