

national cannabis prevention and information centre

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what's
new in
cannabis?

NCPIC's 2010 Short Film Competition winners have now been chosen. Congratulations to our winner Brodie Rocca, and the two runner ups, Chris Ware and Long Cheng. [Click here](#) to view their films and those of the other finalists.



The end of 2010 is fast approaching and the Communications Team is looking forward to a good break over Christmas and a chance to recharge the batteries for what is certainly going to be a busy and productive 2011. Two major focuses for the team have been our work with Indigenous communities and an education package for general practitioners aimed at increasing screening for cannabis use disorder which will then result in linking patients with effective treatment and referral pathways.

The second stage of NCPIC's Indigenous project, 'Cannabis: It's not our culture', where communities involved in the art project received funding for community development schemes is underway. Four of the seven communities involved in the initial phase of the project have applied and received funding for these projects.

To give some brief background to the ‘Cannabis: It’s not our culture’ project, NCPIC decided to focus on working with Indigenous communities due to the disparity between the wider Australian community and Indigenous Australians in terms of levels of cannabis use. While over the last decade, general cannabis use rates have continued to decline, limited research and anecdotal evidence suggest that use in some Indigenous communities has been rising. In some communities this increase has been rapid and significant.

NCPIC decided to focus on a ‘bottom-up’, grass-roots approach to tackling issues caused by cannabis use in

many Indigenous communities, by developing a small grants scheme to fund community-led projects aimed at mitigating and ultimately preventing such issues. In an attempt to encourage community ownership of these projects, empower each community, and build the capacity of community members involved, we have handed over the management and initiation of such projects to the communities themselves. Please see the article at the end of this e-Zine for descriptions and photos of each of the projects completed so far that have received funding from NCPIC as part of this scheme.

The development of resources for the GP education package is nearing its final stage, with a thorough focus testing process of the design and message currently being conducted. Once completed, we plan to launch the project nationally in February next year, through a targeted series of HealthEd seminars where delegates will receive the package after attending a seminar on how best to utilise the resources, delivered by Ms Etty Matalon, NCPIC's National Clinical Training Manager. We will provide further information on this valuable resource in an upcoming NCPIC e-Zine.

research publications

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

- Beseler, C.L. & Hasin, D.S.** (2010). Cannabis dimensionality: Dependence, abuse and consumption. *Addictive Behaviors* 35, 961-969.
- Carroll, C., Zajicek, J.P., Hanemann, C.O., Stone, V., & Zeissler, M.** (2010). POMD11 cannabinoids are neuroprotective in a human cell culture model of Parkinson's disease. *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* 81, e60.
- Dervaux, A., Goldberger, C., Gourion, D., Bourdel, M.C., Laqueille, X., Llo, H., Olié, J.P., & Krebs, M.O.** (2010). Impulsivity and sensation seeking in cannabis abusing patients with schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Research* 123, 278-280.
- Galéra, C., Bouvard, M.P., Melchior, M., Chastang, J.F., Lagarde, E., Michel, G., Encrenaz, G., Messiah, A., & Fombonne, E.** (2010). Disruptive symptoms in childhood and adolescence and early initiation of tobacco and cannabis use: The Gazel youth study. *European Psychiatry* 25, 402-408.
- Hayaki, J., Hagerty, C.E., Herman, D.S., de Dios, M.A., Anderson, B.J., & Stein, M.D.** (2010). Expectancies and marijuana use frequency and severity among young females. *Addictive Behaviors* 35, 995-1000.
- Koskinen, J., Löhönen, J., Koponen, H., Isohanni, M., & Miettunen, J.** (2010). Rate of cannabis use disorders in clinical samples of patients with schizophrenia: A meta-analysis. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 36, 1115-1130.
- LaBrie, J.W., Hummer, J.F., Lac, A., & Lee, C.M.** (2010). Direct and indirect effects of injunctive norms on marijuana use: The role of reference groups. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 71, 904-908.
- Liem-Moolenaar, M., te Beek, E.T., de Kam, M.L., Franson, K.L., Kahn, R.S., Hijman, R., Touw, D., & van Gerven, J.M.** (2010). Central nervous system effects of haloperidol on THC in healthy male volunteers. *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 24, 1697-1708.

Mahmood, O.M., Jacobus, J., Bava, S., Scarlett, A., & Tapert, S.F. (2010). Learning and memory performances in adolescent users of alcohol and marijuana: Interactive effects. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 71, 885-894.

Mato, S., Victoria Sánchez-Gómez, M. & Matute, C. (2010). Cannabidiol induces intracellular calcium elevation and cytotoxicity in oligodendrocytes. *Glia* 58, 1739-1747.

Peters, B.D., Blaas, J. & de Haan, L. (2010). Diffusion tensor imaging in the early phase of schizophrenia: What have we learned? *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 44, 993-1004.

Rogosch, F.A., Oshri, A. & Cicchetti, D. (2010). From child maltreatment to adolescent cannabis abuse and dependence: A developmental cascade model. *Development and Psychopathology* 22, 883-897.

Soriano-Co, M., Batke, M. & Cappell, M.S. (2010). The cannabis hyperemesis syndrome characterized by persistent nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, and compulsive bathing associated with chronic marijuana use: A report of eight cases in the United States. *Digestive Diseases and Sciences* 55, 3113-3119.

Tan, C., Gajovic-Eichmann, N., Polzius, R., Hildebrandt, N., & Bier, F.F. (2010). Direct detection of Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol in aqueous samples using a homogeneous increasing fluorescence immunoassay (HiFi). *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry* 398, 2133-2140.

Tetrault, J.M., Fiellin, D.A., Niccolai, L.M., & Sullivan, L.E. (2010). Substance use in patients with sexually transmitted infections: Results from a national U.S. survey. *The American Journal on Addictions* 19, 504-509.

Yang, K.H., Isaev, D., Morales, M., Petroianu, G., Galadari, S., & Oz, M. (2010). The effect of Δ^9 -tetrahydrocannabinol on 5-HT(3) receptors depends on the current density. *Neuroscience* 171, 40-49.

Yücel, M., Zalesky, A., Takagi, M.J., Bora, E., Fornito, A., Ditchfield, M., Egan, G.F., Pantelis, C., & Lubman, D.I. (2010). White-matter abnormalities in adolescents with long-term inhalant and cannabis use: A diffusion magnetic resonance imaging study. *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience* 35, 409-412.

commentary on research from child maltreatment to adolescent cannabis abuse and dependence: A developmental cascade model – a comment on Rogosch and Colleagues (2010)

Peter Gates

Childhood maltreatment has long been thought to increase the risk of developing substance use disorders. This relationship is seen among those presenting for substance use treatment, where just over one third present with child abuse histories. Child maltreatment is regarded as “a severe, fundamental failure of the care-giving system to provide essential experience-expectant nutrients for optimal psychological development”. This ‘failure’ is thought to leave the child vulnerable to behavioural problems that can result in the development of psychological disorders including personality disorders and internalising disorders. These disorders (particularly conduct disorder) are frequently identified in epidemiological studies to be major contributors to adolescent substance use.

There is a dearth of longitudinal research to detail the pathway between early maltreatment and later substance use. In the present study, Rogosch and colleagues (2010) aim to conceptualise the pathway of childhood maltreatment to substance use using a ‘cascade model’. This model considers how the interaction between psychopathologies (internalising and externalising disorders) and competence (social and academic) at different developmental periods can contribute to lasting changes in future development. To test this model, the authors assessed 415 children (259 maltreated and 156 non-maltreated) on four occasions at ages seven to nine, 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 15 to 18 years. Maltreated children were identified by the presence of documented records of child abuse and or neglect. The non-maltreated sample was matched by demographic characteristics. The interview measures included child self report, peer evaluation, counsellor observation and counsellor report assessments.

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Indigenous community development projects

The following projects have been funded by NCPIC as part of our 'Cannabis: It's not our culture' project. The photos and descriptions below detail each community's approaches to dealing with cannabis-related issues they face. These can also be viewed on the project's website at www.notourculture.org.au

Nowra: New South Wales

The South Coast Women's Health And Welfare Aboriginal Corporation (Waminda), received funding for a healthy lifestyle youth camp, where artwork and stickers were developed around the theme 'Cannabis: It's not our culture' as part of a camp competition. The sticker shown below was designed by a young Indigenous woman, Tarryn, who attended the camp. The stickers will be distributed at community events.



Kintore: Northern Territory

Kintore, a remote Indigenous community approximately 500 kilometres west of Alice Springs, received funding for a number of projects including printing 'Yukiri Wanti' (Leave it! Gunja) on football guernseys, a travelling health-promotion band, an event for mothers and babies and a young men's camp, all of which focussed on dealing with cannabis-related issues and healthy lifestyle promotion.



Geelong: Victoria

A collaboration between the City of Greater Geelong and Indigenous organisation, Wathaurong Glass & Arts, has resulted in an avenue for connection, partnerships and shared learning through the project, 'Beyond Smoke and Mirrors'. Stage 1 of this project resulted in the design and printing of a postcard featuring the sculpture artwork and various help lines and website information for cannabis information and assistance. Stage 2 of the project has launched a travelling exhibition of the glass sculpture that was created for the 'Cannabis: It's not our culture' project, across the Barwon South-West region of Victoria. In addition, a theatre performance piece has been produced which explores the project's themes and involves Wathaurong, local Indigenous organisation—the Ilbjerri Theatre and the Torch project.





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

mobile phones track mental health

Post Script: October 1, 2010

Murdoch Childrens Research Institute has recently developed a mobile phone-based project aimed at helping General Practitioners (GPs) “treat 14 to 24-year-olds with mental health concerns through an interactive mobile phone program that asks participants to answer questions on how they feel.” An electronic diary “allows youths to report a broad range of daily experiences including... alcohol and cannabis use.”

grog more harmful

Adelaide Advertiser: November 2, 2010

A UK study published in *The Lancet* has found that alcohol is more harmful than illicit drugs including heroin, crack cocaine and cannabis, when the “effect on society [and the individual] is taken into account” due to its wide use and “devastating consequences.”

on the pot again

Byron Shire Echo: November 2, 2010

This article discusses California’s vote to potentially legalise cannabis for users over 21 years-of-age and issues surrounding legalisation of the drug. Mental health problems and the negative impact of cannabis on the “developing adolescent brain” are mentioned also, with a reference to NCPIC’s factsheet ‘Cannabis and young people’ <http://ncpic.org.au/workforce/alcohol-and-other-drug-workers/cannabis-information/factsheets/article/cannabis-and-young-people>

the market’s drug problem

Business Spectator: November 5, 2010

Californians voted against Proposition 19, which if passed, would have legalised cannabis for recreational use for those over 21 years-of-age. The article goes on to discuss the pros and cons of legalising cannabis.

cannabis message wins \$2000 for Christina

North Shore Times: November 5, 2010

The winner of NCPIC’s 2010 Poster Competition, 16-year-old Sydney student, Christina Guo, was featured in this article. Her poster, ‘Is it rubbish to you?’ dealt with the negative impact of cannabis use on educational achievement. Christina says of her poster, “I wanted to emphasise how cannabis, in affecting education, is really affecting the user’s future.” [Click here](http://ncpic.org.au/workforce/alcohol-and-other-drug-workers/cannabis-information/order-posters) to order free copies of Christina’s poster. <http://ncpic.org.au/workforce/alcohol-and-other-drug-workers/cannabis-information/order-posters>

ruling is just plain dopey

Courier Mail: November 5, 2010

The suspension of jockey, Jim Cassidy, from horse-racing after his “testing positive to a substance believed to be cannabis” is criticised in this piece. This is due to the negative effects of cannabis on sporting ability, or as the article puts it, “no stoner is stupid enough to believe that dope is a performance-enhancing drug.”

straight talk

Adelaide Advertiser: November 5, 2010

This article cites Adelaide’s high levels of unemployment and past, “liberalised cannabis laws” which encouraged “the explosion in the size and reach of bkie gangs... and enabled a virtual franchising of backyard dope production through hydroponics,” as being responsible for its challenges with cannabis. Despite South Australian cannabis laws having been tightened since the late 1980s, current sentencing of those caught with “moderate amounts” of the drug is said to be too lenient to have a truly prohibitive effect. Increasing evidence of the mental health risks associated with cannabis use is given as a reason to encourage a stricter approach to cannabis use by the law enforcement sector.

cannabis not always easy drug to kick, says new study

Sunday Territorian: November 7, 2010

Media coverage of NCPIC’s recently published Bulletin, *Self-managed change from problematic cannabis use* was obtained in early November. Professor Jan Copeland was quoted in this article saying “Not everybody experiences problems with cannabis, but those who do, experience significant problems. For a long time people did not seek treatment, they thought there was something wrong with them...but what we have seen is an increase in the number of interventions that are available.”

marijuana law win

Adelaide Advertiser: November 11, 2010

Voters in Arizona, US, have “approved a measure that will legalise medical marijuana use for people with chronic or debilitating diseases.” It is now legal in Arizona for sixty grams of cannabis to be purchased by patients with conditions such as HIV/AIDS, cancer and Hepatitis C, and whose doctors recommend use of the drug.

pot does damage

Sydney Morning Herald: November 20, 2010

Researchers at McLean Hospital in Massachusetts, US, have found that “chronic” cannabis smoking “damages the brain, especially in those who take up the habit early.” The study “surveyed 35 regular users and found those who first lit up before the age of 16 performed considerably worse in cognitive tests than those who started later.” A theory of why this is so suggests that cannabis use “changes how the prefrontal cortex develops, leaving teenage brains vulnerable.”

cops warn of home drug crop

Hobart Mercury: November 24, 2010

Tasmanian Police comment in this article that most of the state’s “cannabis supply is grown on home soil and the public should be vigilant when it comes to suspicious activity in their neighbourhood.” NCPIC’s Professor Jan Copeland is quoted saying that cannabis can be “grown all year round and you can control the environment. As a result most studies show it is a drug that is relatively easy to obtain across the country.”

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media stories

NCPIC sessions

Western Times: November 25, 2010

NCPIC National Community Training Manager Annie Bleeker's recent workshops in Charleville and Cunnamulla were featured in this article. The workshops were organised by RHealth's Indigenous Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Prevention Program Officer Darlene Robinson and the "U Can't Touch It" project for young Indigenous people.

subjects to get cannabis in schizophrenia study

Illawarra Mercury: November 27, 2010

The University of Wollongong will be conducting a study investigating the "links between use of the drug [cannabis] and development of schizophrenia." The research team also seeks to identify what protects some long-term, heavy users of cannabis from developing the condition. Dr Nadia Solowij, who will be leading the study says, "There are millions of cannabis users worldwide but only very few go on to develop schizophrenia." The three-year study has been funded by a Health and Medical Research Council grant.

pot cancer risk

Sunday Times: November 28, 2010

According to US research on mice, "cannabis may damage the immune system, leaving the body open to cancer and other diseases." In the experiments, delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main active ingredient in cannabis, "fuelled the production of a flood of cells thought to weaken the body's inbuilt defences." Interestingly, these cells usually "act as a brake on the immune system, stopping its battle against disease from spiralling out of control...but in the case of cancer, they may actually make it easier for tumours to grow and leave the body open to infection." The study was recently published in the *European Journal of Immunology*.

drugs of choice

MX (Melbourne): November 30, 2010

In this article, Dr Ken Pidd of Adelaide's Flinders University, comments on a recent analysis of the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey Data that has found construction workers' drug of choice is cannabis. Construction workers are "more than twice as likely to use cannabis as people in education and defence, who were the least common drug users." According to the analysis, men were also "more likely" to use cannabis than women and "media and telecommunication workers were also high on the list of cannabis users."

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commentary on research

The authors found a direct effect of early child maltreatment on levels of cannabis abuse and dependence symptoms in early and late adolescent periods that could not be accounted for by the influence of late childhood antisocial behaviour. Further, child maltreatment prior to age eight significantly predicted externalising and internalising problems and low social competence. However, cannabis abuse and dependence symptoms were not shown to contribute to changes in late adolescent externalising and internalising pathology. The authors suggest that this may be due to a lag in the development of the adverse consequences of substance use problems.

The study findings were limited in that the influence of parental substance use or participant exposure to substance use in the home was not measured. As noted by the authors, the study would have also benefited by the inclusion of a measure of gene and environment interactions. Despite its limitations, the present study is a testament to the importance of early intervention with vulnerable families to reduce the emergence of child abuse and neglect.

Rogosch, F.A., Oshri, A. & Cicchetti, D. (2010). From child maltreatment to adolescent cannabis abuse and dependence: A developmental cascade model. *Development and Psychopathology* 22, 883-897.



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

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