



Canadian Centre
on Substance Use
and Addiction

Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement by Rita Notarandrea, CEO, on International Overdose Awareness Day

Ottawa, August 31, 2017— Today marks International Overdose Awareness Day and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) joins organizations and individuals at home and around the world to reflect on the tragedy of overdose, to reaffirm our commitment to action and to stand up for those who live with the possibility of overdose every day.

The magnitude of the overdose crisis

Today, we are confronted with a public health crisis that knows no bounds. Overdose from drugs and other substances takes lives and devastates families and communities across Canada. Recent data from the Public Health Agency of Canada indicates that nearly 2,500 lives were lost due to overdose in 2016 — a tragic reality borne out every day by Canadians, regardless of age, gender or background.

What is being done

To address this crisis, we must coordinate our efforts. Together with federal and provincial governments and agencies, non-government organizations, healthcare providers and researchers, CCSA continues to take concrete steps toward solutions. Together, we will continue to deliver on our shared goal of reducing the harms associated with substance use and addiction, and preventing overdose.

Today, CCSA reaffirms its commitment to several initiatives towards achieving this goal.

As signatory of the [Joint Statement of Action to Address the Opioid Crisis](#), CCSA plays a key role as convener of a community of partners whose goal is to reduce the harms of opioids. We share important information and activities, enlist new partners, and deliver on shared commitments to help fill research and information gaps and to generate informed solutions. Our current role has evolved from the request by federal Minister of Health Jane Philpott's for CCSA to partner with Health Canada in organizing the Opioid Conference and Summit (November 2016). The Joint Statement of Action was formalized at the summit and CCSA compiled the May 2017 [report](#) outlining progress made in the first three months after it was activated — a demonstration of collaboration in action.

In addition, CCSA and the Canadian Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (CCENDU) produce drug alerts and bulletins that often address the problem of overdose. This national network of partners assembles information from a range of sources to inform Canadians about emerging drug use trends of immediate concern such as the rise of fentanyl and associated topics such as access to naloxone. By identifying emerging and longer-term trends, we are able to proactively inform prevention and treatment planning and responses. Check out the latest CCENDU bulletin, which is on [Substance-related Harms at Canadian Music Festivals from May to July 2017](#).

CCSA is a member of the Pan-Canadian Collaborative on Education for Improved Opioid Prescribing, an organization focused on delivering educational resources to prescribers. Its objective is to minimize the devastating harms associated with prescription opioids, including addiction, overdose and death, while ensuring Canadians have timely and appropriate access to optimal treatment for acute and chronic pain.



And finally, CCSA is involved with the First Do No Harm executive committee in ongoing work to address the prescription drug crisis. [First Do No Harm: Responding to Canada's Prescription Drug Crisis](#), released in 2013, is a pan-Canadian strategy with 58 recommendations focused on addressing the devastating harms associated with prescription drugs to improve the health and safety of all Canadian communities.

Today we join organizations and individuals across Canada to reflect on our own roles in addressing the crisis of overdose in Canada with a focus on what more we can do individually and collectively. We salute the frontline workers, paramedics, treatment providers and harm reduction workers dedicated to preventing overdose and providing treatment.

Most importantly, we stand with those individuals and their loved ones for whom overdose from drugs and other substances is a constant presence. We commit to continuing to work together with our partners and stakeholders to end the tragedy of overdose in our communities and in our families.

A Mother's Plea

I am the mother of a young man whose life has been destroyed by opioid addiction. It all started with a back injury resulting in a prescription from the doctor for Percocet. ... The need is so powerful. His life is all about getting the next fix. ... I want my son to live a happy, loving, productive life; to win the battle and not to be killed by the drugs that now control him.

A Canadian mother

International Overdose Awareness Day shines a much-needed spotlight on a struggle that many Canadians are attempting to cope with every day. I encourage all Canadians to become involved in International Overdose Awareness Day activities taking place across Canada and to join the many voices calling to #endoverdose.

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CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

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