



Media Release 20 February 2007

Increasing treatment for heroin users: boosting the number of pharmacotherapy providers

While all the attention is on 'ice' and amphetamines at present, there are still many heroin users in our community struggling with addiction. Despite Victoria having one of the best treatment systems for heroin use in the world, we need more options. A new initiative sets out to boost our ability to provide effective treatment to help people move away from the vicious cycle of dependence.

The demand for opioid substitution pharmacotherapies to treat heroin addiction increases by 15% each year and with only a small number of GPs currently providing the service, it is clear that enhancing the number of prescribers will greatly assist the Department of Human Service's stated goals of increasing access to treatment, reducing the stigma associated with this type of treatment and reducing the concentration of pharmacotherapy prescribing in a small amount of doctors.

Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre along with our partners - Western Health, Southern Health, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine - wishes to announce an exciting new educational development which will help boost this service.

Two online courses, accessible via GPEarning, have been designed to assist doctors working with those who have problems with opioid use and dependence. The case study based courses will be available nationally and will provide a lead in for doctors who wish to become subscribers in substitution maintenance treatments.

With almost 13,000 GPs already registered with GPEarning, it is hoped that the new training activities will accommodate the increasingly busy and pressured working lives of doctors. Online learning is self-paced, interactive and accessible – providing doctors with up-to-date information about available treatment options, their effectiveness, and selecting the most appropriate treatment for their patient.

“These courses bring training in the addictions and their treatment to all surgeries and clinics,” says Professor Nick Crofts, Director of Turning Point. “Every GP sees patients with drug problems but they don’t always know how to best handle them.

“This is an exciting resource for practicing GPs to step up to treating this most severe of addictions, and to gain the enormous satisfaction of helping people with a debilitating medical problem to recover their lives. The convenient online format makes the courses accessible, user-friendly and relevant.

“We are hoping GPs not just from Victoria but from all over Australia will log on, have a look and sign up to the courses, thereby adding a major boost to our treatment of this problem.”

A forum to launch the resources will be opened by the Minister of Mental Health, Children and Aged Care, the Honourable Lisa Neville. In addition, the guest speaker will be Dr Nick Lintzeris from Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre who will discuss new developments in opioid dependence management.

Additional information regarding the forum can be obtained by contacting Mal Doreian (03 8413 8721, mald@turningpoint.org.au), or Dimitra Petroulias (03 8413 8706, dimitrap@turningpoint.org.au)

“WHAT'S NEW IN METHADONE AND BUPRENORPHINE TRAINING AND DELIVERY”

5.00-7.30pm (4.30pm registration)

Tuesday, 20th February 2007

Metropole Conference Centre, 44 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

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