Drug Surveillance Systems in Canada

Judy Snider
Office of Drugs and Alcohol Research and Surveillance
Controlled Substances and Tobacco Directorate

Drug Observatories Meeting - CICAD
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Federal system: 10 provinces, 3 territories
Total Population (2006): 33 million
Pop. density: 3.5 persons / sq. km.

British Columbia
N=4,380,256 (13.3%)

Prairie Provinces
N=5,657,532 (17.1%)

Quebec
N=7,700,807 (23.3%)

Atlantic Provinces
N=2,328,831 (7.1%)

Ontario
N=12,803,861 (38.8%)

Territories
N=150,000 (0.04%)
Foundation for National Surveillance Strategy:
Comprehensive Epidemiological Monitoring System

- Emphasis upon identifying general and emerging trends in illicit drug use, (including abuse of pharmaceutical products and other substances).
- Draws on approaches used elsewhere (e.g. IDRS in Australia and DAWN in USA) and existing resources, (e.g. provincial surveys, drug seizure data).
- Main elements:
  - General population *, student, and high-risk population surveys *
  - Emergency department visits due to alcohol and drugs.
  - Trends analysis of type and composition of drugs seized. *
  - Treatment statistics – admissions data.
  - Morbidity and mortality statistics. *
  - Alcohol and pharmaceutical sales.
- Piloted and continuing in British Columbia. Expanding for national coverage.
Prevalence and patterns of use:
- Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS)
- Provincial Epidemiological Monitoring Projects – BC & NL
- Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS)
- CAMH Monitor - Centre for Addictions and Mental Health
- Healthy Behaviours of School-Age Children (HBSC) Survey
- Youth Smoking Survey (YSS)
- Enhanced Street Youth Survey (E-SYS)
- Provincial student drug surveys

Treatment data:
- Provincial (Ont. -DATIS), jurisdictional (BC –RHA)

Information on seized substances:
- Controlled Drugs and Substances Database (CSDS)
- Drug Analysis Service’s Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
- Loss and Theft Database
- Forgeries Database
CADUMS – Core Indicators

- General health and well-being;
- Smoking (control variable - minimal);
- Alcohol use & harms (AUDIT);
- Pharmaceuticals use (use not as indicated; use to get high);
- Cannabis use & harms (ASSIST & CUDIT);
- Other illicit drugs use & harms;
- Alcohol & cannabis use and driving;
- Pregnancy & substance use;
- Demographics.
Surveys - Youth in school

National Surveys:
- Youth Smoking Survey – in school survey with a main focus on tobacco but alcohol and drug use has been captured since 2002.
- Health Behaviours of School Aged Children – a WHO initiative will be capturing alcohol and drug use data in 2010.
- Core indicators include:
  - Lifetime use
  - Use in last 12 months

Provincial Surveys:
- e.g., Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (6,000 students in 120 schools) – alcohol, drug use and harmful consequences of use since 1977
Comprehensive Monitoring System

- Multi-method system, launched in British Columbia in 2006; implemented in Newfoundland & Labrador in 2009.
- Development for expansion to Nova Scotia and Quebec, consisting of the following modules:
  - Provincial analysis of CAS, CADUMS & student drug surveys
  - Regional analysis of illicit drug seizures
  - Statistics on alcohol sales
  - High-risk population surveys:
    - Rave/club/bar patrons.
    - Street-involved youth.
    - Injection drug users.
  - Survey of Emergency Department visits due to alcohol or drugs.
  - Alcohol & drug-related morbidity & mortality analysis
  - Treatment statistics – admissions, principal substance...
  - Justice system statistics – arrests, convictions.
Drug Analysis Service (DAS) Database

- **Mandate:** to conduct chemical analyses of suspected illicit substances for cases proceeding to trial
- Trends in the types and composition of illicit drugs that are in circulation across the country, including:
  - Prevalence of seized drug samples:
    - National overviews and regional differences.
  - Purity of Samples:
    - Analysis of drug adulterations and cutting agents.
  - Accuracy of identification:
    - What seized substances are suspected to be versus what they actually contain.

Limitations
Controlled Drugs and Substances Database (CDSD)

- CDSD contains comprehensive seizure information (e.g., seizure date, quantity, type and number of seizures) for substances that require authorization under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) for destruction.
- The lag time between seizure and destruction can be 2 to 3 years.
Summary of Drug Situation in Canada

- The use of illicit drugs in the general population appears to be increasing since the 1990s, although there is evidence of declining prevalence of illicit drug use by youth.
- The youth rates of use remain higher than the rates of use for adults.
- The abuse of pharmaceutical products, both prescription drugs and over-the-counter products, is emerging as a significant concern, with prevalence rates exceeding those for some illicit street drugs.
- Drugs thought to be ecstasy or methamphetamine are increasingly including other drugs and substances.
- In 2007, the federal government introduced a new National Anti-Drug Strategy (NADS), with increased emphasis and resources for prevention, treatment and enforcement, including a high-profile anti-drug communications strategy.
- A surveillance strategy is being implemented to better monitor various aspects of the drug situation in Canada.
Judy Snider  
Manager of Surveillance  
Office of Drugs and Alcohol Research and Surveillance  
Controlled Substances and Tobacco Directorate  
Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch  
Health Canada  
123 Slater Street, A.L. 3509C  
Ottawa ON K1A 1B9  
CANADA  

telephone: (613) 948-2160  
E-mail: judy_snider@hc-sc.gc.ca