



## Opioid Addiction Guidelines from British Columbia featured in leading medical journal

A novel approach to treating opioid addiction in British Columbia is attracting major international attention after being reviewed and featured in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. [A Guideline for the Clinical Management of Opioid Addiction](#), a first-of-its-kind in Canada, aims to improve health professionals' knowledge of the range of evidence-based treatments available for opioid addiction, one of the most challenging forms of addiction facing the health care system today. Untreated opioid addiction is a major driver of the recent surge in illicit drug overdose deaths, which prompted B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, to declare a public health emergency earlier this year.

In the absence of evidence-based recommendations, dangerous practices like offering medical detoxification as an isolated strategy have been common for many years whereas methadone has been the primary first line medication for treating opioid addiction. With support from the Province of British Columbia, the guidelines were developed to articulate the diversity of possible treatment options that can be staged and tailored to individual patient needs. The guideline's unique suggestions include recommending buprenorphine/naloxone (trade name Suboxone®), as the preferred first-line treatment for opioid addiction.

According to research summarized in the guidelines, Suboxone® is six times safer than methadone in terms of overdose risk, and permits more flexible "take home" rather than pharmacy dosing. The guidelines support using a stepped and integrated care approach where treatment intensity is continually adjusted to match

individual patient needs and circumstances over time, and recognize many individuals may benefit from the ability to move between treatments.

"By incorporating principles of evidence-based medicine into addiction care, the province has the potential to realize a dramatic reduction in the public health and community concerns arising from untreated addiction," said Dr. Evan Wood, guideline committee chair and Professor of Medicine at the University of British Columbia, Medical Director of Addiction Services at Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care, and Director of the Urban Health Research Initiative at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

In August 2014, Health Minister Terry Lake announced an initial \$3 million investment to support Dr. Wood's research, education and clinical care guidance program in an effort to harness new ways to treat addiction and related health concerns. The guidelines are one example of the foundational work made possible through this partnership.

"It is great to see our investments in improving the addiction system of care are generating international recognition and, given the seriousness of the opioid overdose crisis, there is an urgent need to expand this work provincially and move on recent changes that have been made to improve access to evidence-based treatment," said B.C. Health Minister, Terry Lake.

Most recently, in order to expand patient access to opioid addiction treatment in the province, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C. lifted restrictions on prescribing Suboxone®. This regulatory change has

been recommended by health researchers in the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM), who issued a [report](#) calling for improved access to evidence-based treatment for opioid addiction as a strategy to address the provincial overdose crisis. Credited with an 80 per cent reduction in fatal opioid overdoses in France, Suboxone® can now be prescribed by primary care and generalist physicians in B.C.

"I'm pleased to see the province's approach to addiction is moving towards one where care providers can be guided by the best available evidence for the prevention and treatment of addiction," said Leslie McBain, community advocate and founding member of [Moms Stop the Harm](#), whose son Jordan died of a prescription drug overdose. "If these new policies and expert guidelines were available provincially when my son was struggling with addiction, we may have been successful in our efforts to identify a physician who could provide life-saving treatment."

The opioid addiction treatment guidelines were developed by an interdisciplinary committee comprised of individuals from Vancouver Coastal Health, Providence Health Care and representatives from the B.C. Ministry of Health. The guidelines were subsequently peer-reviewed by patient and family groups as well as local and international experts in the field. Authors of the opioid addiction treatment guidelines have partnered with the BC Association for People on Methadone to disseminate the guidelines and information to public and private clinics around the Lower Mainland, with additional outreach efforts underway in other B.C. health authorities.

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— Dr. Evan Wood, Professor of Medicine at UBC and Director of the Urban Health Research Initiative at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS



## INTERVIEW

# BC-CfE looks at patient-physician relationships to improve HIV outcomes



» Dr. Lianping Ti, a Research Scientist for the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and an Assistant Professor in the Division of AIDS at the UBC Department of Medicine, presented her latest research during the 2016 International AIDS Society conference in Durban, South Africa, July 21, 2016, which examined whether patient-physician relationships can play a role in improving HIV treatment outcomes among people living with HIV (PLHIV).

In June 2016, the United Nations and Member States formally endorsed the BC-CfE's 90-90-90 global treatment target, which proposes by 2020 we should have 90% of infected people globally aware of their status, 90% of known positives start HIV treatment, and 90% of those on treatment to drive the amount of virus in their bloodstream down to undetectable levels. This will decrease the burden of HIV related disease (i.e., morbidity, mortality and new infections) by 90% by 2030.

Within this context, Dr. Lianping Ti's paper entitled "The impact of patient-provider attachment on HIV-1 RNA plasma viral load suppression among people living with HIV/AIDS in British Columbia" was made possible by the BC Ministry of Health-funded 'Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV & AIDS' pilot project, as well as an Avant-Garde Award from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) led by Dr. Julio Montaner, Director of the BC-CfE.

We spoke with Dr. Ti about her work.

**BC-CfE** – Who took part in the study and how were you able to measure treatment outcomes?

**Dr. Ti** – We used a dataset of non-identifiable people living with HIV (PLHIV) in B.C. through health administrative databases.

**BC-CfE** – What is the most important message you found regarding physician-patient relationships and their impact on HIV treatment outcomes in your study?

**Dr. Ti** – We found patients who had a higher level of engagement with the same provider for HIV-related services were more likely to achieve Viral Load (VL) suppression. This leads us to believe continuity of care between patients and their providers contributes to optimized HIV treatment outcomes in this setting.

**BC-CfE** – What else can HIV treatment providers learn from this study?

**Dr. Ti** – As HIV becomes managed as a chronic disease and PLHIV experience multiple complex comorbidities such as addiction, viral hepatitis, and mental health issues, frequent contact with a physician will be needed in order to achieve optimum health outcomes. In light of this, health-care providers should be supported to adopt a patient-centered care approach incorporating the patient's belief systems about HIV/AIDS, medications, comorbidities and healthcare utilization into discussions around how to most effectively achieve VL suppression.

**BC-CfE** – How can this information be used to reach the 90-90-90 Target goals?

**Dr. Ti** – The present study adds to the current literature by demonstrating through population-level administrative data that having strong patient-provider engagement throughout the HIV care continuum may have a beneficial impact on VL suppression among PLHIV, and interventions that aim to build these relationships may assist in achieving the 90-90-90 target set out by UNAIDS.

## EDUCATIONAL COURSE

# BC-CfE HIV Diagnosis and Management Online Course

» The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS has developed an online HIV Diagnosis and Management course for health care professionals and providers working in the field of HIV/AIDS. The course provides comprehensive and evidence-based knowledge about the diagnosis and management of HIV/AIDS. It offers new skills and knowledge applicable

to clinical practice and quality patient care. The course takes about eight to ten hours to complete and is accredited by the B.C. Chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada for up to 10 Mainpro+ credits. A certificate will be issued from the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS upon successful completion.

<http://education.cfenet.ubc.ca/online-courses/>

## AWARDS

# The Canadian HIV Observational Cohort Collaborative Research Centre awards four outstanding researchers

» The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS wishes to congratulate the following recipients of the 2016-2017 Canadian HIV Observational Cohort (CANOC) Scholarship Awards Program: Lauren Mackenzie (post-doctoral award), Taylor McLinden (doctoral award), Tyler O'Neill (doctoral award) and Urvi Rana (masters award).

Lauren Mackenzie has an MD from the University of Calgary and is completing an HIV Clinical Fellowship at the BC-CfE under the supervision of Dr. Mark Hull. Her research examines the impact of geographic location on outcomes within the Canadian HIV care cascade.

Taylor McLinden is a PhD candidate at McGill University, working with Dr. Joe Cox. His research focuses on injection drug use and food insecurity in HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) co-infected individuals in Canada.

Tyler O'Neill is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, working with Dr. Ann Burchell. His research focuses on gender differences in HIV-positive patients on antiretroviral therapy co-infected with HCV.

Urvi Rana is an MSc student at the University of Ottawa, working with Dr. Curtis Cooper. Her research focuses on hepatitis B characteristics and clinical outcomes in HIV co-infected individuals on antiretroviral therapy.

## AWARD

# UHRI researcher receives CIHR award



Dr. Keith Ahamad, a Clinician Researcher with the Urban Health Research Initiative (UHRI) at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of British Columbia (UBC), was recently awarded an Embedded Clinician

Researcher Salary Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The four-year Embedded Clinician Award is a new priority-driven initiative of the CIHR Roadmap Accelerator Fund designed to support clinical research leaders with the vision, skills and capacity to achieve innovative change in healthcare.

In collaboration with key Health Systems Partner Organizations – the BC-CfE and Providence Health Care – Dr. Ahamad will develop an integrated program of addiction medicine research, education, and clinical care guidance, and will focus on engaging primary care to improve access to evidence-based treatment and care for addiction in B.C. and beyond.

## LECTURES & EVENTS

### What's New in Addiction Medicine?

#### **Cannabinoids for pain: Weeding through the evidence**

Speaker: Dr. Mark Lysyshyn

Tuesday, September 27, 2016, 12–1PM

Hurlburt Auditorium (2nd floor), St. Paul's Hospital

### Forefront Lecture

#### **SALOME Study**

Speakers: Drs. Scott MacDonald and Eugenia Oviedo-Jones

Wednesday, September 7, 2016, 12–1PM

Large Lecture Theatre, Providence Level 1, St. Paul's Hospital

For more information, contact us at

**Education@cfenet.ubc.ca** or visit our website at **www.education.cfenet.ubc.ca**

### Gairdner Symposium

#### **The untold story of the National Microbiology Laboratory**

Speaker: Frank Plummer MD, OC, OM, FRS, LLD, DrSc, FRCPC

#### **PI3-Kinase and Cancer Metabolism**

Speaker: Lewis Cantley, PhD

Monday, October 24, 2016, 4–6PM

Life Sciences Centre, Lecture Theatre 2 (LSC 2), 2350 Health Sciences Mall, UBC

## BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

- > Improve the health of British Columbians with HIV through comprehensive research and treatment programs;
- > Develop cost-effective research and therapeutic protocols;
- > Provide educational support programs to health-care professionals;
- > Monitor the impact of HIV/AIDS on B.C. and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of HIV-related programs.

Physician Drug Hotline

1.800.665.7677

St. Paul's Hospital Pharmacy Hotline

1.888.511.6222

Website

[www.cfenet.ubc.ca](http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca)

E-mail

[info@cfenet.ubc.ca](mailto:info@cfenet.ubc.ca)

Funding for the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS is provided by the BC Ministry of Health through PharmaCare and the Provincial Health Services Authority.

