

**News release embargoed until 0.01am, 30 April, 2007**

## **Medical training on drink and drugs abuse cases 'must be improved'**

UK medical schools are leading the call for substance abuse training to become part of every trainee doctor's course in response to the huge volume of drink and drug-related hospital cases.

Alcohol is responsible for up to 25% of all hospital admissions and up to 70% of attendances at A&E. Nearly six million adults in the UK engage in binge drinking (drinking more than double the recommended daily maximum of alcohol), according to recent estimates. And one in 12 adults whom a doctor sees will have used illegal drugs at some time in the past year, more than a third of a GP's patients will be smokers.

Yet a wide-ranging survey of 32 medical schools by The International Centre for Drugs Policy (ICDP), based at St George's, University of London, discovered that across the UK, students' training on substance abuse was patchy and uncoordinated, and often viewed as a specialism.

The ICDP today issued a report on substance misuse topics that should be included on medical schools' curriculums. These range from treatment regimes for different drug addictions to dealing with drunk and aggressive patients.

A copy of Substance Misuse in the Undergraduate Medical Curriculum has been sent to every medical school in Britain.

ICDP director Professor Hamid Ghodse said: "The misuse of alcohol, drugs and tobacco is one of the biggest health challenges today. It impacts not just on the health but also the wider lives of those using these substances, their families, their colleagues and the wider society. It lies behind a high proportion of all crime, and it costs the country billions of pounds each year in prevention and treatment programmes and crime.

"Those who misuse substances will inevitably, at some stage, be seen by doctors, who therefore have a vital role to play in recognising substance misuse and in assessing and managing the problems associated with this."

The guidelines also aim to remove the stigma attached to addiction to improve the way such patients are treated.

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Notes to Editors

Professor Ghodse is available for interview. Contact him on 020 8725 1459.

'Substance Misuse in the Undergraduate Medical Curriculum' has been a project funded by the Department of Health, steered by a committee representing all the UK's medical schools, the General Medical Council, World Health Organisation, British Medical Association, Association for the Study of Medical Education, student groups, and government departments responsible for drug and health policy.

A survey of all 32 UK medical schools was undertaken between May 2005 and September 2006, to gain an overview of where substance misuse currently fits into the undergraduate curriculum, and also discover good practice and key experts in the topic. The survey has shown that although substance misuse figures broadly across many parts of the curriculum, this is usually un-coordinated and un-planned, and what students learn and have experience of has little consistency across medical schools. A summary of the survey's findings can be found on the ICDP website: [www.icdp.org.uk](http://www.icdp.org.uk)

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St George's, in Tooting, London, where the ICDP is based, is a college of the University of London. The medical and healthcare college offers courses in medicine and biomedical sciences, midwifery, nursing, physiotherapy, radiography and social work, the last in conjunction with Kingston University. The school is extremely active in research and has a high reputation in addictions, infectious diseases and diseases of the heart and circulation, as well as genetics and strokes.