

# **OCTOBER 2005 Network Newsletter**

## **Provincial Coordinator Update**

I recently had the privilege of speaking at the graduating ceremony for the 12 graduates of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner training in St. John's, Newfoundland. This is the first group in the province. They are a dynamic team of nurses eager to begin in their new role. The training was provided by Sheila Early R.N., SANE from British Columbia, and their Medical Director previously was the Director for the Windsor SA/DV program so there are close ties across Canada already established. We wish them much success with their new program. We briefly discussed how to strengthen the connections between our Canadian programs as almost every province has established a sexual assault program. The support, sharing, and information we can provide to each other will help us to improve our own services and increase our collective voice.

### **Provincial Conference**

The Ontario Government is organizing a Provincial Conference on Domestic Violence. This conference will bring together professionals in the community service, health, education, and justice sectors. The conference will be held November 28-30, 2005 in Toronto. Donna Creighton, Brantford SA/DV Program Coordinator and myself will be presenting on SA/DV programs collaborating with community partners in providing services.

### **HIV PEP Report**

This report will be completed and submitted to the Ontario Women's Health Council by October 31, 2005. In advance of that, the results will be presented to Program Coordinators at our Coordinator meeting in this month. We will also be presenting the results at the Annual Conference for SA/DVTC's next year in Kingston, so that front-line staff have the opportunity to hear how your hard work contributed to excellent research affecting clinical practice. Next week, Monica Vautour RN, Program Coordinator for the Sarnia SA/DVTC and I will be presenting the HIV PEP project at the International Association of Forensic Nurses in Washington, D.C.

### **Curriculum for ER Staff**

The Ontario Women's Directorate has funded a provincial initiative for the development of curriculum directed to emergency department staff responding to domestic violence. The expert panel will include several nurses and physicians from various SA/DV programs across the province.

**Sheila Macdonald R.N.  
Provincial Coordinator**

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## CONNECTIONS... Gambling & Domestic Violence

I recently joined the DA/SACC at York Central Hospital. I also work in the Problem Gambling Program at Addiction Services for York Region. In the first few months I was at DA/SACC we had many lunch room conversations about problem gambling. We discussed prevalence, signs of problem gambling and the impact on families. As a result of these conversations, we noticed that a number of clients we've seen in the domestic abuse program have reported having a partner who gambles problematically.

With the increasing availability and accessibility of gaming venues in Ontario, there's also an increasing prevalence of problem gambling. It's estimated around 340,000 people in Ontario have a moderate to severe gambling problem. Someone who has a gambling problem will show signs similar to other addictions such as: repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop, going back to win money lost, and being preoccupied with gambling. They also experience negative consequences in various aspects of their life including work, family and social relationships, physical and emotional health, leisure time, and finances.

There has been virtually no research exploring the connection between domestic violence and problem gambling. However, a study by Muelleman, DenOtter, Wadman, Tran and Anderson (2002) found that there was an increased risk for intimate partner violence among women whose partners were identified as problem gamblers (Muelleman *et al.*, 2002). A Canadian study by Smith and Wynne (1999) also identified domestic violence as one of the types of crimes committed by problem gamblers. However, many people continue to be unaware of the possible link between domestic violence and problem gambling.

At our Centre we have worked with women experiencing domestic violence who reported having a partner who gambles problematically. Their stories have highlighted that some of the violence they've experienced in their relationship was connected to the desperation and secrecy associated with their partner's relationship with gambling. Due to the extensive secrecy that is involved, we wonder how many clients may have been unaware of their partner's gambling behaviours. We could hypothesize that as a gambler becomes more desperate they might also become more dangerous towards their partner or anyone else who might stand in the way of their gambling.

In my 3 years working in the area of problem gambling, I have seen how the desperation that many problem gamblers experience can result in emotional, verbal, financial and physical abuse within their families. I have also noticed how family members' attempts to stop someone from gambling (*i.e. by reducing access to money, confronting the gambler about money spent*) can put them at risk for various types of abuse.

Our hope in writing this article is to raise awareness about the potential relationship between domestic violence and problem gambling. As clinicians working in the area of domestic violence, it is important that we start asking questions about gambling, and explore how gambling might be influencing our client's experiences.

**Jennifer Cleary, Adolescent Counsellor  
Richmond Hill DA/SACC**

*For additional information and resources on problem gambling, please refer to the following provincial services:*

- Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-888-230-3505
- Ontario Problem Gambling Research Center: <http://www.gamblingresearch.org>

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- Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: [www.camh.net/egambling](http://www.camh.net/egambling)
- Responsible Gambling Council of Ontario: [www.responsiblegambling.org](http://www.responsiblegambling.org)

Muelleman, R.L., DenOtter, T., Wadman, M.C., Tran, T.P., and Anderson, J. (2002). Problem Gambling in the Partner of the Emergency Department Patient as a Risk Factor for Intimate Partner Violence. *The Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 23 (3), 307-312.

Smith, G. and Wynne, H. (1999). *Gambling and Crime in Western Canada: Exploring Myths and Reality*. Retrieved September 9, 2005, from Ontario Problem Gambling Research Website: <http://www.gamblingresearch.org/contentdetail.sz?cid=2394>

## Caring for Children ... PROGRAM FOCUS

The Sault Ste. Marie Sexual Assault Care Centre is fortunate to have a comprehensive program that provides a quick and effective response to the needs of sexually abused children (*aged 3 - 18*). Our program has grown throughout the years to include both medical and counselling responses for this target group.

Our Centre includes a 'child friendly' medical examination room. Children with histories of dated sexual abuse receive a booked medical appointment. One half hour before their exam, the child is introduced to the room. 'Hands on' touching of equipment and toys is encouraged, and children are given the opportunity to 'drive' the colposcopy chair. Every step is taken to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere where the child is given choices and the power to stop or refuse an exam. The exam is performed by a trained physician. In keeping with Network recommendations, our Centre is using a colposcope to photograph every child who is referred for examination. During the examination, the child is given many age appropriate choices including: time to remove underwear, which person or persons can be present in the examination room, whether or not to view the exam on a video screen, and so on.

For the past 12 years, our Centre has provided a counselling response to children who have experienced sexual abuse. All children are provided with an initial appointment within 2 weeks of referral to our Centre. Our pediatric counselling component offers a variety of treatment modalities: these include trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, art therapy, sand tray and play therapy as well as other supportive modalities. Our Centre also provides support to non-offending parents and families to assist them in supporting their child through treatment. We also support parents in dealing with their own response to disclosure. Our counselling Centre includes a child-friendly play room, a sand tray room, and a large art therapy area. Children and their caregivers are initially given separate appointments with one of our counsellors. A trauma assessment is completed for the children and the treatment modality and focus of therapy is based on assessment findings.

The Sault Ste Marie Sexual Assault Care Centre is currently working on the development of a medical response protocol for physically abused children. This response will consist of referrals to SACC from local pediatricians, CAS and other caregivers. We are currently working closely with our pediatricians and Children's Aid Society to develop child-sensitive and seamless protocols to address the needs of this target population.

**Rita Taillefer, Manager**  
**Sault Ste Marie SACC/PAC**

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## CENTRE FOCUS... **Surviving Fire**

On Labour Day weekend I was away at a family reunion. On my return I was met with the news there had been a fire in downtown Whitby where our Administration and Counseling office is located. Two buildings adjacent to ours had been destroyed by fire. Luckily our building was built at a later time and due to its strong fire wall we suffered only smoke damage. We were forced to relocate, and everything - and I mean *everything!* - in our office was taken away to be cleaned. Fortunately, our local Addiction Centre, Pinewood, offered us temporary office space, and we continue to offer services and are able to meet our clients either in their homes or out in the community.

Even though Pinewood's staff is welcoming and the office space is beautiful, we feel like orphans - the suddenness of what happened had us reeling that first week. Not having advance notice of the changes to come threw us into a state of disorientation. We all felt quite vulnerable. I am reminded daily of the trauma that people affected by Hurricane Katrina must be going through. The stress we're experiencing is minimal in comparison. At least we have a home to return to at day's end. I'm also reminded of our clients - how they're often met with similar challenges. I found our compassion and empathy was heightened as we recognized our own trauma.

I'm also reminded to focus my energy on positive things and amplify those, instead of focusing on the negativity of what had happened. Our building is still standing and we'll be returning eventually. No one was hurt or killed, even though it had been a possibility for tenants who lived in the two buildings that were destroyed. A passerby driving to church had noticed the fire and enrolled other passersby to help him in throwing things at the second floor windows until they woke up one of the tenants - who then woke the others. Everyone got out safely!

So apart from feeling a bit sorry for ourselves, we are all okay and it is just another day in the life of our Centre.

**Shirley Burnett, Manager  
Whitby/Oshawa SA/DVCC**

## **Including Paramedics ... NEW RESEARCH**

Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre have received \$285,200 from the Ontario Women's Directorate. It's to develop an educational program to train paramedics in recognizing early signs of intimate partner abuse. Training these front line health care providers is another step in our efforts to identify and effectively respond to people experiencing domestic violence.

The project was initiated by Sunnybrook-Osler Centre for Prehospital Care. They will be working in partnership with the Ontario Paramedics Association, Toronto EMS, **the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre at Women's College, and the Centre for Research in Women's Health.** Additional input is being sought from the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, and survivors of violence who have had experience with EMS. **This panel of experts is currently reviewing research and best practices with respect to identifying and responding to Domestic Violence.**

**There were 5 'ride alongs' with paramedics conducted by the Sexual Assault Centre, as well as an afternoon spent with the Central Ambulance Communications Centre.** This was to engage in knowledge transfer with respect to the identification and effective response to disclosures and suspicions of domestic violence - as well as to examine current EMS practices, attitudes, and identify gaps in knowledge and resources. It was evident to both the paramedics and myself that there are gaps in awareness and education and that the following items need to be addressed:

1. Encouraging paramedics to see assessing for DV as part of their role and within their scope of practice

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2. Identifying situations of DV where it's not obvious
3. A need for resources and the ability of paramedics to engage in crisis counseling and make appropriate referrals in order to respond effectively

In addition to the 'ride alongs', on-line surveys and focus groups will be held to gather information from a cross section of Ontario paramedics and dispatchers.

Innovative computerized simulation software will be developed by the company, *e=mz2*. This software will be comprised of approximately 8 scenarios with an increasing level of difficulty to test paramedics' and emergency dispatchers' abilities to identify indicators of violence. When engaging in the simulated conversation, there will be a set of responses that the user can select from, ranging from inappropriate to best response. The user has to get 100% 'best responses' before being able to move onto the next training module.

The ultimate goal of this research is to make recommendations to change standards of practice for paramedics and dispatchers across Ontario when dealing with domestic violence.

**Petra Norris, Team Leader**  
**WCH SA/DVCC**

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### Upcoming Events

- ◆ Domestic Violence Conference: hosted by the Ontario Women's Directorate  
*November 28-30, 2005*  
Toronto
- ◆ 20th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family  
Maltreatment  
*January 23-27, 2006*  
San Diego, CA  
[www.chadwickcenter.org/san\\_diego\\_conference.htm](http://www.chadwickcenter.org/san_diego_conference.htm)
- ◆ Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Training  
*February 20-24, 2006*  
Toronto