



MEDIA RELEASE

News/Assignment/Health Editors

Impaired driving a concern among Manitoba senior high school students

November 13th, 2008 . . . Winnipeg . . . The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) releases new data on alcohol and other drug use within the Manitoba middle and high school student community. A recent study and report provides an overview of the findings based on a survey of 4992 students from 55 randomly selected schools.

“The study was designed to provide insight into substance use in school-aged youth, prevalence of impaired driving, perceived parental use, and attitudes towards substance use and abuse,” said John Borody, CEO. ***“This information can lead to changes and improvements to prevention and intervention services in schools.”***

Some of the Report’s major findings are:

- The most frequently used drug is alcohol;
- 69% of all senior students report past year drinking with approximately a quarter of these having had 8 or more drinks on one occasion;
- Nearly 40% of all students have been in a car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Approximately 22% of all students have been in a car with a driver who has used cannabis.
- Approximately 67% of cannabis users have used the drug before the age of 15;
- More students report using ecstasy;
- Over 40% of smokers had their first cigarette by age 12

School-based prevalence studies have been conducted every few years in Manitoba. Studies were done in the 1990's and then in 2001 and most recently in 2004. Compared to the 2004 survey, less students report past year use of alcohol.

“This is consistent with other student surveys in Canada,” says Borody. “But the most surprising findings were the high percentages of students who are drinking heavily - more than 8 drinks at a time.”

A significant portion of high school students meet the criteria of being medium or high risk for alcohol problems and the number of students who have driven or ridden in a car with a driver who had used alcohol or cannabis is also of concern.

The information from these types of surveys helps the AFM plan prevention and rehabilitation services for youth. Currently the AFM is working with community partners to develop programs that highlight the dangers of driving impaired, the consequences of riding in a car with an impaired driver and the risks of binge drinking.

“Among many things, this report highlights the need for more education and targeted interventions taking into consideration gender differences,” says Borody. “Females are more at risk for tobacco use, prescription drug use, stimulant and over-the counter drug use, while males are more at risk for frequent alcohol and cannabis use and impaired driving in senior years.”

As a recognized leader across Canada in addictions services, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba looks to continuing work in this area with researchers, community-based program providers, policy and decision makers, clinicians, school and parents/guardians. These partnerships and collaborative efforts will help improve the health of students.

A copy of the full report can be obtained at the AFM website, www.afm.mb.ca.

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