



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine

Addiction Medicine Update

RACP Congress 2016

Dr Matthew Frei, AChAM President 2014-16

A/Prof Adrian Reynolds, AChAM President 2016-18



- What is addiction medicine?
- Clinical & public/population alcohol & drug health
- The way forward

What is addiction medicine?

Huge burden of disease-small specialty



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

- Massive health burden & modest number of Fellows and trainees
- Crosses all areas of health
- Setting is right for a growth in specialty numbers

Addiction medicine as clinical clean up crew



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

- Specialty that steps in when there is chaos and mess
- Human behaviour disrupts clinical care*
- Risks start escalating
- Expertise in “under-understood”, unattractive and image-problematic field

*At patient and governance levels

Addiction medicine in clinical practice & public health: an update



- College alcohol policy
- Public & community culture changes
 - Reduce price, access & promotion
 - Volumetric taxation & review of WET
 - Regulation of outlets
- Clinical role of addiction medicine
 - Engaging primary care
 - Medical management & innovation



- Largest growth field in clinical work for addiction medicine in last decade
 - Misuse and low value prescribing of opioid analgesics, benzodiazepines & antipsychotic drugs
 - Addiction medicine embedded in some pain clinics
- Public & policy
 - Professional clinical practice guidelines
 - Training packages
 - ERRCD (real time controlled drug monitoring)
- EVOLVE



- Precautions in opioid prescribing
 - Keep dose under 50mg MME, caution above 90mg MME (CDC, 2016)
 - Review opioid therapy regularly
 - *Opioid therapy is not indicated for the long term management of chronic noncancer pain based on current evidence (HNE, 2015)*
- Growth in OTC codeine use
- Role of maintenance opioid therapy programs



- Emerging evidence of increase in regular/dependent users of crystalline methamphetamine in last 3-5 years
 - ED & hospital separations
 - Ambulance attendances
 - Drug treatment episodes
- Medication assisted therapy
- National Ice Task Force

Other frontiers: an update



- New model in approach to substance of dependence
- Limited research supporting cannabis' benefit in (>100) promoted indications (over existing agents)
- Magical drug?
- “Evidence” based on emotionally potent anecdote
- US experience of conflating legalisation with medicalisation



- Novel psychoactive substances
 - Online drug markets
 - “research chemicals”
 - Uncertain legal status
 - Adult/head/smoke shop products
 - Synthetic cannabis-like agents
 - Other synthetics
 - Difficult to detect in immunoassay urine toxicology



- Nicotine vaporising devices
 - RACP position statement
 - Recent statements by RCP & PHE
 - New FDA regulations and EU TPD

The way forward for addiction medicine



- A dynamic field crossing internal medicine, behavioural sciences and public health
- A modest size specialty “punching above weight” given breadth and burden of clinical issues
- Need to grow numbers to address increasing role in policy, clinical expertise and governance
- Ice task force plan for physician like item numbers from November 2016

Thank you
myfrei@gmail.com