

## **HOW SAFE ARE 'SAFE DRUGS'? CODA TO TARGET PRESCRIPTION AND OVER THE COUNTER DRUG ABUSE:**

CODA's latest initiative, a new drug abuse prevention program focused on Rx/OTC Drugs, is garnering a lot of attention. This timely program targets youth, parents, other adults, pharmacists and other health professionals (doctors, nurses, paramedics, police, etc.) in addressing the issues surrounding prescription and over the counter drug abuse and misuse. The purpose of this program is to highlight the eminent dangers of misused and abused Rx/OTC drugs. Recipients will be educated on the biological and psychosocial effects of Rx/OTC abuse including both short and long term consequences and implications. This is a comprehensive educational and awareness raising program aimed at preventing the abuse and misuse of Rx/OTC drugs. Recently, such abuse has made headlines across Canada. The Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (2007) conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health indicates that 11% of surveyed students said it was "easy or very easy to get prescription drugs, specifically OxyContin/pain relievers".

The Rx/OTC abuse program started with some grassroots outreach amongst pharmacists who were anxious to bring the issues of this form of abuse in their respective regional areas to the attention of CODA staff. They were looking for direction, education and help in dealing with this issue. Investigating the matter further, and with the support of some of its advisors, CODA was quick to circulate a call out to its Educators and peer health promotion specialists for proposals. Looking to assure the relevancy of this new program, and in line with CODA's best practices framework, CODA was careful to reach out to Ontario health promoters working in the field of substance abuse that have first hand working experience with the Ontario face of drug abuse and its diversity.

The new Rx/OTC program will incorporate various dynamic learning tools and educational resources like educational videos, pamphlets, interactive activities and an on-line component.

Having birthed the idea of the Rx/OTC drug abuse program, CODA felt the need to designate a version of this program to Pharmacists and other concerned health professionals. The professionals module is delivered through a dynamic and engaging session where CODA's team of drug abuse experts work with health professionals to increase their capacity to prevent Rx/OTC drug abuse within their own working environment and community at large. Some of the highlights of this module are at-risk populations, methods of drug diversion and awareness raising and prevention techniques.

For more information about Rx/OTC Abuse program and how to bring it to your school, community or association, please contact the CODA offices.