



Media Release

Improving Addictions Services for Women and Their Children: Turning Research into Action

Hamilton, ON (May 01 2009) – A better understanding of how best to share knowledge between researchers and those who work with women with substance use issues is the focus of **Connections**, a program of research being led by researchers at McMaster University and McMaster Children’s Hospital in Hamilton, Ontario. This is the first program of research of its kind in the area of women with substance use issues and their children.

This research is particularly timely given substance use during pregnancy has been identified as a major public health concern. At least 24,000 Canadians under the age of 21 have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the annual cost to Canadians is more than \$344 million. Maternal use of alcohol and other drugs can have profound effects on child health and development. Many women who continue to abuse substances after childbirth have challenging life circumstances, including lack of affordable housing, diminished capacity for parenting, and difficulties providing stable, nurturing environments for their children.

Alison Niccols, Associate Professor from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, along with Wendy Sword and Maureen Dobbins, Associate Professors in the School of Nursing, are co-leading this \$1.4 million 5-year program of research, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), that involves collaboration with researchers across Canada, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario, and the University of British Columbia. The primary goals of Connections are to identify the needs and preferences for receiving research evidence among decision makers and clinicians working with women with substance use issues in almost 800 addictions agencies in Canada and to use this information to develop, implement and evaluate knowledge translation and exchange strategies. For more information on Connections, please visit the website at www.connectionsCanada.ca.

Niccols said that findings will help improve services, reduce costs (in terms of crime, unemployment, neonatal intensive care, etc.), and ultimately improve the health of a vulnerable, marginalized population of women and children at high risk for poor outcomes.

“The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is proud to fund a program that will share the findings of researchers with those who work directly in the community,” said Dr.

Anthony Phillips, Scientific Director from the CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction. “Connections stands out as an innovative program and encourages the use of research to fight addiction and improve the health of Canadians.”

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada’s agency for health research. CIHR’s mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health-care system. www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

For more information, please contact :

Alison Niccols, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator, Connections Research
Psychologist/Clinical Director
Infant-Parent Program
McMaster Children's Hospital-Chedoke Site
208 Holbrook
Box 2000, Hamilton, Ontario
L8N 3Z5

phone: 905-521-2100 ext. 77408

fax: 905-521-7926

email: niccols@hhsc.ca