February 2, 2017

The Opioid Crisis: Challenges, Risks and Opportunities

Edmonton – Canada is in the midst of an opioid crisis that, according to Alberta Health Services (AHS) is predicted to result in more than 400 deaths in Alberta in 2017. For many experts, no other public health crisis on this magnitude would have been allowed to grow without intervention, but substance use is commonly regarded as a personal failing and a criminal justice issue, as opposed to a health issue.

The majority of the opioid deaths in Alberta are related to the drug fentanyl, but recently a much stronger opioid has emerged. Carfentanil is used as an elephant sedative and is up to 100 times stronger than fentanyl and is now linked to 15 deaths in Alberta, according to AHS.

MacEwan University is hosting a symposium to discuss the current state of the crisis, identify challenges and explore solutions within the post-secondary context. The seven-member panel of experts include Dr. Joanna Oda with Alberta Health Services; Dr. Elaine Hyshka with the University of Alberta’s School of Public Health; and Petra Schulz, an instructor in the Faculty of Health and Community Studies at MacEwan University. Schulz’s son Danny died of an opioid overdose in 2014.

“Overdose does not discriminate and the victims come from every part of society,” said Schulz. “For too long the response to the opioid crisis has been to blame its victims and the results have been devastating. A new approach, one which embraces measures that have been shown to aid recovery and reduce harm from a substance use, is needed.”

The panel presentation will explain the concept of harm reduction and provide information about harm reduction initiatives currently underway in Edmonton.

When: Monday, February 6
Time: 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.
Where: Kule Lecture Theatre, third floor, Robbins Health Learning Centre (109 street and 104 avenue)

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

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