



DRUGFREE**SG** ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

SEP 2024

Dear Partners and fellow Advocates

This month, we are pleased to bring you highlights from the Malay-Muslim Organisations (MMO) Rehabilitation Network Forum that took place on 25 September. At the forum, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, announced the formation of three new project groups, including one jointly led by CNB.

Read about the impact of advertising on youth cannabis use intentions in Canada post-legalisation.

We extend our thanks to the teachers, students and youth advocates who took part in the DrugFreeSG Video and Essay Competitions. Check out the winners and some of their winning entries in this issue of the newsletter.

Happy reading!

We value your feedback and inquiries on our programmes and activities. Please feel free to reach out to us at cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg.

Thank you for your unwavering support in our shared mission for a drug-free society.

On 25 September, the MMO Rehabilitation Network Forum 2024 was held at the Ministry of Home Affairs where various organisations shared initiatives to support Malay/Muslim families who are affected by the incarceration of family members. The forum, graced by Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, were attended by officials including Commissioner of Singapore Prison Service (SPS) Ms Shie Yong Lee, Deputy Commissioner (Operations and Rehabilitation), SPS, Mr Matthew Wee and Deputy Director of Central Narcotics Bureau (Policy & Administration) Mr Sng Chern Hong. Some of the initiatives shared include the National Council Against Drug Abuse (NCADA)'s DrugFreeSG Fund, MUISxCNB Grant and Dadah Itu Haram's campaign collaborations with mosques to raise anti-drug awareness. During the forum, MOS Faishal announced the formation of the three new project groups to help vulnerable families, with the third group jointly led by CNB:

- Group 1: Focuses on strengthening support for families of ex-offenders. This group is co-led by Ms Saleemah of New Life Stories, Singapore Muslim Women's Association Chief Executive Aidaroyani Adam and Ms Salina Samion from SPS.
- Group 2: Aims to support inmates and former offenders with poor or no family support, especially drug offenders. This group is co-led by the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association Secretary, Dr Siti Nur Alaniah, and Mr Mohamed Nizaar from SPS.
- Group 3: Looks into measures to prevent offending among youth and reduce delinquency in the community. This group is jointly led by 4PM Malay Youth Literary Association Executive Director Didicazli Cindy, Indian Muslim Social Service Association Secretary Irfana Banu, Mr Rudy Dzulkarnaen from SPF and Mr Muhammad Rizal from CNB.

To read more, scan the QR code for the full article:



For more information on the DrugFreeSG Fund, you may visit NCADA's website at: www.ncada.org.sg.



Attendees at the MMO Rehabilitation Network Forum 2024

Learn more about the harms of drugs and drug prevention at the upcoming community roadshows/events.

Event Name	Date/Time	Venue
DIH Youth–Parents Cycling Event (in collaboration with District West Mosque Cluster)	6 Oct 2024, 9.30am to 12.30pm	Clementi Ave 4 (Ulu Pandan Park Connector) Starting point: Hasanah Mosque
Project Give by SINDA	19 Oct 2024, 11.45am– 2.15pm	Indian Heritage Centre, 5 Campbell Lane, S(209924) – Activity Centre
	26 Oct 2024, 11.45am– 2.15pm	
Nee Soon GRC Community Resilience Day	9 Nov 2024, 3 – 6pm	MPC @ Khatib (Next to Block 846 Yishun, Singapore 760846)
Engaging Youths to Shine	10 Nov 2024, 10.30am – 6pm	e2i (Devan Nair Institute)

CALL for VOLUNTEERS

Interested in sharing the drug prevention message? Email us at **CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg** if you are keen to help out at any of our roadshows and events!



READ/EXCERPT FROM 'WAITING FOR YOU'

"Waiting For You", an initiative by the Singapore Prison Service features a compilation of stories written from the perspectives of the drug abusers' family members and loved ones. In this edition, we share with you "I Am Sorry Son", a heartfelt letter from a mother to her incarcerated son.



I Am Sorry Son

I miss you so much. You mean the whole world to me. There are so many things that I want to share with you, but sadly you are once again not by my side.

Son, I feel so guilty towards you; I want to apologise to you for so many things. I am sorry for not being there for you during your growing up years, for leaving you under the care of your paternal grandmother as your father had custody of you after our divorce. I am sorry that you were exposed to drugs at the tender age of 11 because your father made you buy drugs for him. I am sorry for not being present as I was in and out of prisons because of my own addiction problems. I am sorry for not ensuring that you attended school, which caused you a lot of hardships later in life. Spending so much time apart has negatively impacted our relationship. I struggled to bond with you and to understand you when you came to live with me in your 20s. But trust me, I love you so much, my tears cannot stop flowing whenever I think about you. You are always on my mind, and I worry about how you are coping in prison. I feel so down even when I am eating as I will be wondering if you are eating well too.

I was shocked when I first found out you were arrested for your drug use. Seeing you go down the same path tore my heart apart. Watching you transform into a different person when you were on drugs was painful. It hurts me to watch how the gentle, soft spoken you turned aggressive and messed up the entire house. I recall the nights I was worried sick when you did not return home. I stayed awake praying for your safe return. I had made the decision to report you to the police when you were on drugs. Although I struggled with that decision, I would rather have you misunderstand me than to lose you to drugs. I could never bear it if something untoward were to happen to you.

I have been there, and I know it in my heart that this path you have taken will be a difficult one for you. You will find yourself fighting tough battles throughout your life, but it will all be worth it if you succeed. I admit that I previously used drugs to cope with stress, until I realised much too late that it was only a temporary relief. Back then, it was the only way I knew how to feel better and forget my worries.

I am unsure about your reasons for using drugs, but I want to tell you that I have learnt through multiple incarcerations that drug use is not the answer, and certainly not the cure for your problems. I have gained some knowledge from my prison programmes, even though I was initially resistant. I have learnt to keep myself engaged at work and at home. I have also found a sense of purpose in volunteering as it brings me joy to be able to help others who are going through similar struggles. I try to stay positive by reminding myself that it is not the stress that gets to us but the way we respond to our stressors. There are good and bad days and I have learnt to embrace the mall. I have survived many hardships and I strongly believe that you can too.

Please know that I will always be here to hold your hand and walk with you on your journey towards recovery. This journey has come with plenty of obstacles, and it has cost us so much. We have lost a lot of precious time creating fond memories together. I really miss spending time with you; we cooked together and made each other laugh. These memories and words like "thank you", "I love you mum" have kept me going all these years. These memories are priceless. Regrettably, we always had to cut these beautiful moments short when you made U-turns back to prison within a short time after your release.

It is a fact that I am aging, and my health will deteriorate. I remember discharging myself from hospital once just to go down to bail you out. Everyone tried to persuade me not to go but I know how much my presence meant to you. You hugged me and cried when you were bailed out. I knew you were disappointed with yourself for letting me down, but I have never held it against you because I understand how difficult it is for you.

Please let me know how mama can support you. I will continue to pray for you, and I want you to pray too. All I want is for you to be a good person and lead a simple life. Sometimes life is easier than we think. I will always be here for you. I am looking forward to the day that I can welcome you home to create more beautiful memories together.

Note: Names and locales have been changed to protect the identities of family members.

In this Part 2, read about the impact of advertising on youth cannabis use intentions following recreational legalisation in Canada. This follows Part 1 in last month's newsletter, which discussed cannabis use among youth and young adults in Canada post-legalisation. In case you missed it, you can find Part 1 by scanning the QR code below.

CANADA'S CANNABIS EXPERIENCE POST-LEGALISATION

2 Cannabis Advertising Impacts on Youth Cannabis Use Intentions Following Recreational Legalisation in Canada: An Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) Study

Addictive Behaviours (June, 2024)

With the Cannabis Act in 2018, adult recreational cannabis and some cannabis advertising have been legalised in Canada. This study examined how real-time exposures to cannabis advertising influenced youth cannabis use risk in Ontario post-legalisation.



Scan for the full article (Part 1) titled 'Understanding youth and young adult cannabis use in Canada post-legalization: a scoping review on a public health issue':



Key Takeaways of the Study



Canada's youth are routinely exposed to cannabis advertising despite laws that prohibit them.

This is in line with evidence from the tobacco industry where partial restrictions on advertising have largely been ineffective in reducing use. Research on other age-restricted substances (e.g. medical cannabis, alcohol) has also shown that companies routinely ignore prohibitive advertising laws and intentionally target their products at youths. The opportunity to engage youths as potential lifelong brand-affiliated users is a strong incentive to violate laws that restrict advertising to youths. This shows the need for a complete ban on cannabis advertising.



With cannabis policies not yet entrenched in their culture and law, Canada should act swiftly to protect the youths from cannabis-related harms.

Key findings of the study are as follows:



1. Structural ads (i.e. storefronts, billboards and posters) were the leading sources of youth advertising exposure to cannabis.

This is particularly problematic if the ads are located where youths frequent (e.g. en route to school, work) as they would then likely see the same ads on multiple occasions.



Negative effects of advertising (e.g. increased substance use) also tend to accumulate with repeated exposure.



2. Exposures to cannabis advertising through digital media were high, despite prohibitions on direct cannabis advertising.

Digital promotions have been found to be particularly effective in increasing cannabis use among youths. One recent study (Whitehill et al., 2020) determined that each additional social media platform used increased youth risks of past-year cannabis use by 48%.



Social media advertising also poses a unique risk as it includes active engagement features (e.g. like, comment, share) and is often accompanied by endorsements from trusted public figures/peers, which tend to further increase youth product use.



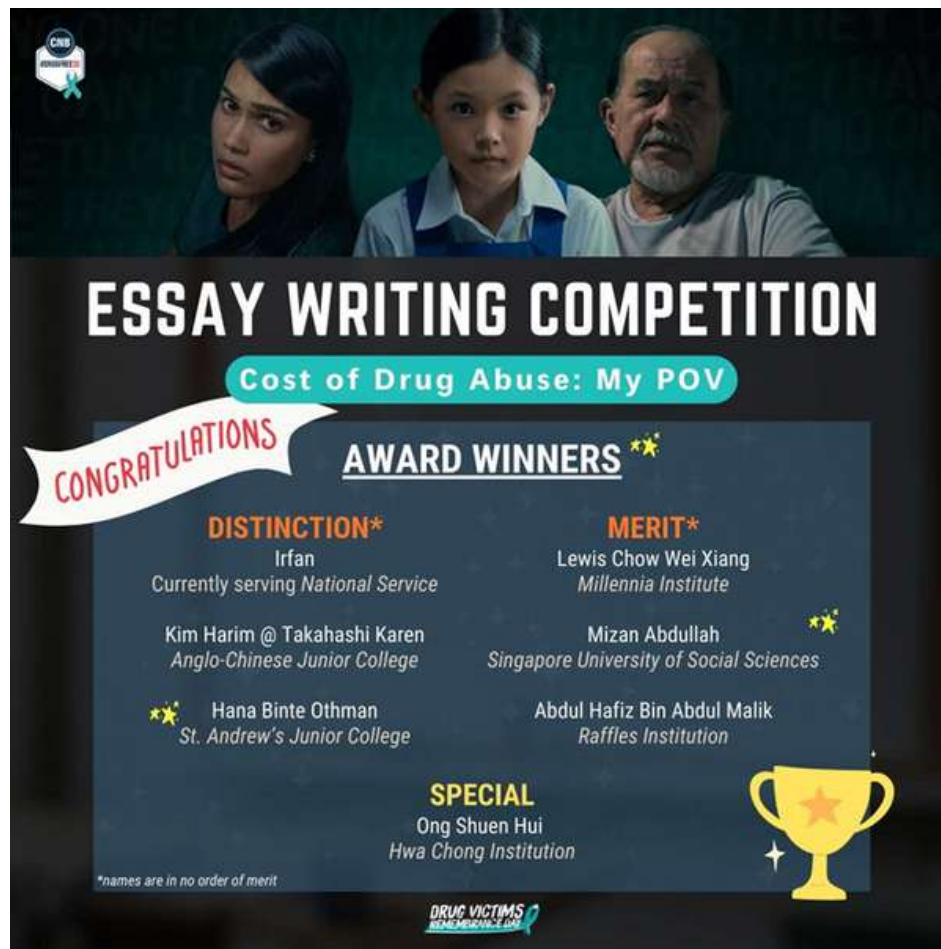
3. Real-world exposures to cannabis advertising increased youth intentions to use cannabis when such exposures occurred.

This is consistent with existing literature on other substances (e.g. alcohol, tobacco) where exposure to related ads predicted higher substance use intentions among youths.

Frequent re-exposure effects on use intentions also tended to accumulate over time, which may then shift youths from ambivalence to a categorically favourable perception of cannabis use.

Scan for the full article (Part 2) titled 'Cannabis advertising impacts on youth cannabis use intentions following recreational legalization in Canada: An Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) study':





We are thrilled to announce the results of the DrugFreeSG Essay Competition 2024.

Congratulations to our winners! Their exceptional essays provided deep and insightful perspectives on the profound impact of drug abuse on individuals, families, and the society. We were impressed by your beautifully expressed narratives, which had a good blend of personal accounts and research.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to all participants for your outstanding efforts. Your thought-provoking submissions have contributed to raising awareness about the consequences of drug abuse. Thank you for being part of this important conversation.

Stay tuned! We will be featuring the winning essays in our upcoming newsletters, starting this month.

"One death is too kind." Mr Lee Kuan Yew, our first Prime Minister, retorted in an interview by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) when questioned on his ruthless stance on Singapore's death penalty for drug traffickers. He asserted, "If you still come in with kilos of [certain prohibited drugs], which will destroy hundreds, thousands of families, one death is too kind." Similarly, throughout his years in office, Mr Lee was questioned incessantly on his unwavering stance to execute drug traffickers. Yet, his steadfast, radical and unorthodox stance has aged well; he was a visionary who discerned that allowing drug abusers their self-indulgent state of being 'high' would equate to their loved ones' lives hitting new lows.

I vividly remember proudly donning the Anti-Drug ribbon and vowing to #saynotodrugs since the ripe age of seven. This memory was later buttressed by my discoveries of the insidious psychological effects of drug consumption through various media sources. Specifically, with the decriminalisation of drug use in Oregon in 2020, I pored over videos panning over the dystopian downtown area littered with slumped bodies and listless wandering faces— a lasting impression of the widespread, real world impacts of drugs on a city. The spill-over effects on third parties, however, often remain understated.

"I didn't know at that time, was it my brother speaking, or the drug speaking." Gina's account of dissonance at encountering a family member addled by drugs will forever be etched in my mind. Her story represents countless other nameless family members hurting because they struggle to reconcile their adoration and respect for family displaying abusive behaviour under the influence. Imagine being threatened by your own biological brother for money for drugs under the threat that he would reclaim his own daughter, your niece, from your care whilst horrifyingly insinuating that he would do awful things to her if the money was not forthcoming. This is Gina's very account recounted to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) of her being between a rock and a hard place. Filial piety is deeply rooted in our Asian heritage—caring for family because the same blood flows through our veins. Yet, when drugs alter one's brain chemistry and heighten one's dependence on drugs for certain chemicals, even loved ones may become irrational and oftentimes unrecognisable. As such, the continuous defensive stance family members have to take against others and themselves when picking up after their loved but unrecognisable drug-abusing family members is taxing— both on their mental and physical well-being.

Furthermore, we are all complicit in shouldering the cost of drug abuse. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse in the United States of America, an estimated 65 percent of the United States prison population has an active Substance Use Disorder (SUD). While these are not local statistics, they are an eerie premonition of how drug usage correlates with crime rates. As taxpayers, because of drug abuse, we would be forking out up to 65% more to incarcerate criminals if not for our strict drug laws. Yet, our general population is still burdened with increasing proportions of income being allocated to crime management due to drug abusers, creating a lack of empathy towards drug abuse victims and a rift in our already diverse society.

Regrettably, the number of arrested drug abusers in Singapore aged below 20 years old increased by 8% in 2023 from 2022, according to CNB. This increase could be attributed to the glamorisation of drug consumption by the entertainment industry. As a young adult myself, I am uncomfortably aware of posts on social media and television shows skewing substance abuse to be 'cool'. Romanticising the abuse of drugs is not uncommon, with productions like HBO's *Euphoria* (2019) and *The Idol* (2023) depicting idolised A-list actors consuming high doses of drugs. Culture is of paramount importance. Yet, impressionable youths must be redirected to the cold hard reality of drugs with increased and accurate public education.

At this juncture, allow me to dissect Singapore's strategies aimed at minimising drug use. Though it seems obvious, the stalwart resolve to not legalise drug use is of paramount importance. Given to weaker leadership willing to accede to global trends, Singapore could earn millions, if not billions, in revenue merely by legalising drugs. From tourism receipts being bound to exponentially increase alongside the gains from heavy taxation, legalising drug use could very much be a rational economic decision for our Little Red Dot. However, this idea is unfathomable to the average Singaporean as we continue to stand behind the decision to impose capital punishment for the trafficking of drugs in tandem with our public education highlighting the adverse effects of drugs.

Singaporeans, however, must keep in mind that while we neither condone nor support drug abuse, we must support drug victims as a friend, neighbour and fellow citizen.



Congratulations to all winners of the DrugFreeSG Video Competition 2024!

Great job to all participants for your hard work and effort in promoting a drug-free Singapore. The judges truly enjoyed watching all your creative and inspiring entries!

Scan here to check out all submitted entries:



We would also like to give a special mention of the videos that won the heart of the masses, garnering more than 1,900 popularity votes in total.



Do continue to care for your community and spread anti-drug awareness to your family and friends.

Thank you for all your support towards the DrugFreeSG Video Competition 2024. See you next year!



Notice something different? Our newsletter is getting a fresh look! Keep an eye out for progressive changes in the coming months, leading up to our exciting full transformation in the November issue. Stay tuned!



HELP US SPREAD THE ANTI-DRUG MESSAGE



The **Anti-Drug Abuse Advocacy Network (A3 Network)** is a volunteer scheme jointly administered by the NCADA and CNB. The A3 Network, which is under the umbrella of the Home Team Volunteer Network comprises various groups of people who identify with, support and promote the anti-drug cause*.

**Volunteers under the Network do not represent CNB and NCADA, nor are they spokespersons of CNB and NCADA during or outside the term of deployment.*

Help us grow the A3 Network by telling your friends about us and the volunteering opportunities with CNB. Scan the QR code for more information or drop us an email at cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg.



Drop us an email at CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg if you would like to add your colleagues and friends into our mailing list or if you wish to unsubscribe.

If you come across drugs, or what you suspect to be drugs, you should call CNB hotline at **1800-325-6666**. Kindly note that airtime charges apply for mobile calls to 1800 service lines and calls are free of charge only if made from regular land lines.

For more information, please visit the CNB website at www.cnb.gov.sg

Connect with us:



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