

## THE FOUR PILLARS - TREATMENT

The treatment pillar includes a range of interventions and support programs that encourage people with addiction problems to make healthier decisions about their lives.

Treatment improves health by decreasing preventable deaths, illnesses and injuries, while improving social integration. Early intervention is a crucial aspect of any treatment system. Treatment seeks to create a continuum of care by recognizing that different drug use patterns must guide treatment strategies. Since there is a chronic relapse pattern with addictions treatment, abstinence is not always the only measure of success. Treatment interventions must also respond to multiple individual needs as well as particular needs of specific populations.

Treatment services, delivered by Vancouver Coastal health, include core services at community health centres, withdrawal management and residential and non-residential services. Currently, there are four levels within withdrawal management ranging from home detox to medical detox. Treatment is most effective when it considers factors unique to each individual and tailors treatment accordingly. Addiction services have been decentralized in Vancouver, with the goals of decreasing acute care demand and improving treatment completion rates.

Currently in Vancouver, alcohol dependence affects over 12,000 people and injection drugs over 9,000 people. Treatment makes sense on both humanitarian as well as economic grounds. According to the March, 2006 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse report, *The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002*, the overall social cost of substance (tobacco, alcohol and illegal drug) abuse in Canada in 2002 was \$39.8 billion.

Methadone treatment and counselling has been an area of significant growth in the treatment of heroin addiction in the province. The number of people in BC treated with methadone was 8,319 at the end of 2006.

Vancouver is also one of three Canadian cities that participated in the North American Opiate Medication Initiative (NAOMI). Supported by the City of Vancouver, the study seeks to determine whether prescription heroin, or a combination of heroin and methadone, might be a better treatment for those who do not respond to methadone alone. Enrolment started in February 2005 and the study results are expected in the summer of 2008.

Meanwhile, Vancouver Coastal Health has increased its treatment budget by about \$2 million per year, over the past five years, adding new addiction services, an increased number of detox beds and the development of addiction housing.

Updated January 2008