

**FAQ About Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), and Association of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (ARNBC) Application for Intervener Status in Supreme Court of Canada hearing on Insite**

**February 4, 2011**

**What is Insite?**

Insite is North America's first legal supervised injection site. As an integrated part of Vancouver Coastal Health's continuum of care, Insite opened in the Downtown Eastside in September 2003. It provides a safe, health-focused place where people with problematic substance use can go to inject pre-obtained drugs and connect with health care and addiction services. Insite operates on a harm-reduction model, which is a policy or program directed towards decreasing the adverse health, social and economic consequences of drug use without requiring abstinence from drug use.

**Why is RNAO/CNA/ARNBC interested in this case?**

Nurses believe that harm reduction, including supervised injection, is an essential tool in a comprehensive health-care strategy for substance use and addiction. There is strong evidence that Insite has been successful in significantly reducing the risks associated with problematic substance use. This facility has made a difference in the lives of many individuals. Nurses, through the work they do at Insite, which includes supervising injections, managing and treating overdoses, and providing health education to Insite's clients, are critical to Insite's success. We believe nurses and other professionals should be able to continue doing their work and that Insite should continue to operate. The outcome of this case obviously affects Insite but it also has the potential to affect the implementation of other harm reduction programs in other parts of the country.

**What will be the basis of our argument?**

We continue to work with our legal team on the substance of our argument, should leave to intervene be granted by the Court. We have indicated to the Court that we intend to focus on the following three points:

- (a) the direct relationship between the role played by nurses at Insite and the preservation and exercise of the *Charter* rights of Insite's clients;
- (b) how nurses' own *Charter* rights may be threatened; and
- (c) the relevance of Insite's health and social benefits to the legal analysis the Court will undertake.

## **What role do nurses play at Insite?**

Nurses play a significant role at Insite. They establish trusting relationships with their clients and know what their clients' specific needs are. They carry out primary care functions, including supervision of injections, overdose prevention and management, first aid, HIV testing, acute and chronic wound care, immunizations, reproductive health care, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, counseling and referrals to external health and social services. They also provide clients with important health education.

## **A lot of people have a problem with the notion that people can simply walk in off the street and use their illicit drugs without being charged?**

It's important for people to understand that problematic substance use is not a character flaw, a weakness or a matter of choice. Many factors such as genetics, physiology, physical and mental illness, historical and current experiences of trauma, homelessness, and poverty can lead someone to become addicted to any number of substances or behaviours. Addiction is almost impossible to overcome alone. People need all the support and help they can get to address problematic substance use. Harm reduction recognizes all of these challenges and attempts to provide the individual with the appropriate care they need. Insite is staffed by knowledgeable professionals and their work is backed up by evidence that shows they're making a difference in peoples' lives.

## **Where can I learn more about Insite?**

Insite Supervised Injection Site <http://supervisedinjection.vch.ca/>

Lightfoot, B. , Panessa, C., Hayden, S., Thumath, M., Goldstone, I., Pauly, B. (2009). Gaining Insite: Harm Reduction in Nursing Practice. *Canadian Nurse*. 105(4), 16-22.

Scientific Evaluation of Supervised Injection cohort study, British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS <http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/our-work/initiatives/seosi>

## **Where can I learn more about harm reduction?**

Canadian Harm Reduction Network <http://canadianharmreduction.com/>

Pauly, B. (2008). Harm reduction through a social justice lens. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 19 (1), 4-10.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2009). *Supporting Clients on Methadone Maintenance Treatment*. <http://www.rnao.org/Page.asp?PageID=122&ContentID=2946>

Street Nurse Program, British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and the National Film Board of Canada (2008). *Bevel Up: Drugs, Users & Outreach Nursing* (documentary). <http://films.nfb.ca/bevel-up/>

Toronto Harm Reduction Task Force <http://www.torontoharmreduction.org/>