



Statement on BCCSU Research Independence

The BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) is a University of British Columbia (UBC)-affiliated research centre that conducts independent evaluations of a range of substance use programs. You can find more about the organization's governance [here](#).

The BCCSU was established in 2017 under the leadership of the provincial government following years of consultation with academics, clinicians, community members, and public health experts who identified the need for a provincial centre focused on providing expertise in substance use and addiction in order to address the longstanding gaps in treatment and care. The result was the creation of the BCCSU, which works with the Province and other health systems partners to develop, help implement, and evaluate evidence-based approaches to substance use and addiction in British Columbia.

By driving innovation through research, education, training, the development of clinical and guidelines, and coordination among health system partners, the BCCSU is helping to transform the substance use and addiction system of care in BC and write the roadmap for an effective response nationally and globally.

Since its establishment, the BCCSU has contributed to building capacity in BC's health system to deliver evidence-based treatment and care to support wellbeing and recovery. This includes creating the province's first-ever clinical guidelines to manage opioid use disorder (OUD) and training hundreds of clinicians to provide treatment and care for British Columbians with OUD. This work has led to a greater than 155% increase in prescribers provincially.

The BCCSU has built upon this work by developing clinical guidelines for high-risk drinking and alcohol use disorder while providing educational programming that has reached more than 50,000 health care providers.

Additionally, the BCCSU has led and/or contributed to the evaluation of novel interventions to address addiction and the ongoing toxic drug poisoning public emergency. This internationally recognized research program brings millions of dollars in funding to BC and helps to create jobs, retains top research talent in the province and develops "made-in-BC" approaches that has led to improvements in the types of services, programs, and treatment being made available to British Columbians.

An example of this work is the recently created Road to Recovery (R2R) initiative. Developed in partnership with Providence Health Care and Vancouver Coastal Health, this initiative is a comprehensive strategy to create access to the full continuum of addiction care that meets the needs of people living with addiction and help make recovery from addiction possible.



There are more than 20 research scientists that are housed at the BCCSU (most of them affiliated with UBC, but some with Simon Fraser University, UBC-Okanagan, University of Waterloo, and the University of Montreal) that develop and implement independent programs of research. Independence is a principle that is core to academia, scientific autonomy, and the ability of investigators to develop and conduct research projects without external pressures or coercion. These projects include evaluating innovative programs responding to the ongoing toxic drug poisoning public health emergency that is taking the lives of nearly seven British Columbians each day.

Findings from these evaluations are regularly shared with community groups, government, and health system partners in order to optimize the delivery of evidence-informed health policy and services that promote the well-being of people who use substances.

Research and evaluation activities conducted by BCCSU researchers are primarily funded through peer-reviewed, study-specific grants from external agencies, including federal entities and non-profit foundations such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Michael Smith Health Research BC. This peer-reviewed research funding is utilized to conduct the research itself and goes towards activities such as hiring and training study staff, remunerating study participant as per existing ethical guidelines and maintain data systems for data analysis and reporting.

Study findings (interim and/or final) are reported back to the funding agencies as per standard guidelines. However, the funding agencies have no influence on the interpretation or reporting of study results, nor do the agencies whose programs are being evaluated.

It is common practice in the health system to evaluate novel (ie. new, different, or innovative) solutions to urgent and emerging public health crises. Examples of previous such life-saving research include HIV medication buyer's clubs, needle distribution programs, and supervised injection sites.

Consistent with this history, the BCCSU has supported the scientific evaluation of the compassion club operated by the Drug User Liberation Front (DULF). The work involved qualitative interviews with program participants and secondary analysis of quantitative data. The evaluation was supported through peer-reviewed grants and approved through independent ethics review by the Research Ethics Board (REB).

All research conducted by BCCSU research scientists is subject to this rigorous, independent ethical review processes through the Research Ethics Boards (REB) associated with the Principal Investigator's home research institution(s) and, when applicable, of health regions and/or health



service organizations (e.g., universities, provincial health authorities, hospitals, etc.) where data collection will occur. REBs are independent of the parent institutions and follow all requisite criteria pursuant to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. A REB review includes an evaluation of the purpose of the research, the appropriateness of research methods, the capacity and ability of the research team, potential conflicts of interest (including financial), and participant risk profiles, among other topics.

BCCSU welcomes the opportunity to meet with community members to answer any questions they might have and to describe how our work is contributing to improving the communities we live in and protecting the wellbeing of people who use substances.