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## NEWS RELEASE

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BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, PHSA

### **Website helps youth identify risky medication and substance cocktails**

**Vancouver** – A new first-of-its kind website helps youth and healthcare professionals/partners understand the risks of mixing prescription medications, alcohol and other drugs.

The DrugCocktails.ca website was funded by BC Mental Health & Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). It was developed in partnership with researchers from BCMHAS, BC Children's Hospital Pharmacy Department and Youth Health Program, PHSA, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the University of Ottawa.

DrugCocktails.ca expands on the 2002 BC print publication "Cocktails" by adding over 80 new medications and creating separate interactive versions for: 1) youth, providing practical plain language warnings and information; and 2) health care professionals and counselors working with youth, providing detailed medical information underlying the warnings.

Youth and professionals can type a medication name into the website, and learn the risks of combining that medication with any of 10 substance categories such as alcohol, marijuana and various street drugs. The website is harm reduction-focused, intuitive and easy-to-use. Warning icons that indicate "Serious Risk of Harm", "Think First" or "Unknown Dangers" help youth identify risks of medication-substance combinations at a glance.

"No one can be certain how a person will react when medications are mixed with other substances, often we just don't know, but we do know that youth who take prescription medications sometimes still experiment with substance use," said Dr. Dean Elbe, Project Researcher, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist, BCMHAS. "There is no green light here—it is never safe to arbitrarily mix medications and substances. DrugCocktails.ca provides information and highlights risks to help youth make safer, informed choices and contributes to improved health literacy among youth."

Other members of the DrugCocktails.ca research team include Dr. Sandra Whitehouse, Physician, Adolescent Medicine, BC Children's Hospital; Sabrina Gill, Nurse Clinician Youth Health Program, BC Children's Hospital; Dr. Darcy Santor, Professor, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa; Dr. Mark Norris, Physician, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

**Learn More:**

[BC Mental Health & Addiction Services](#) (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), provides specialized provincial tertiary mental health services to British Columbians. Together, we help British Columbians be healthy by providing health awareness and promotion information and the tools to assist people to make healthier choices.

[BC Children's Hospital](#), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents.

The [Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario](#) (CHEO) is a pediatric health and research center providing outstanding family-centered patient care, pioneering breakthrough research, and training the health care professionals of tomorrow.

The [University of Ottawa](#) is the largest bilingual (English-French) university in the world and is among Canada's top 10 research universities.

For more information or to arrange an interview call the PHSA media pager: 604.871.5699.