



Ontario Native Women's Association

Media Release

For Immediate Release: March 19, 2012

Culturally Relevant and Gender Balanced Approach Needed to Address OxyContin Crisis

Ontario - The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) has serious concerns regarding the overall lack of consultation, planning and foresight in regards to the discontinuance of OxyContin and the numerous detrimental affects it will have on Aboriginal women and their families.

OxyContin, the highly addictive and abused prescription drug known for its heroine-like euphoric effects was introduced to the market in 1995 under the misconception that it was not addictive and was freely prescribed by doctors for pain management. As of March 1, 2012, it has been discontinued due to rampant rates of abuse and misuse and replaced by OxyNEO, a drug characterized by its properties against any tampering with its physical state. This change is meant to address the issue of misuse and abuse of the prescribed narcotic.

The OxyContin crisis is set to have particularly drastic affects amongst Aboriginal communities where the addiction rates are between 50-70%. Immediate intervention is required to deal with the mass withdrawals that these communities are set to experience as residual access to the drug is quickly diminishing.

Eliminating OxyContin from the market may address the abuse of this particular narcotic , but it fails to address the underlying causes of substance abuse and the detrimental affects it can have on children and families. Consideration needs to be given to the socio-economical issues such as poverty, intergenerational trauma, abuse, and racism that incite and sustain addictions and relapses. There is also a dire need to address the lack of access to adequate treatment options for Aboriginal communities. This includes not only addiction centres, counselling programs, mental health workers, and healthcare facilities, but culturally appropriate and community based treatment that would address the root of the issue.

"ONWA calls for a joint, community based approach that will ensure timely and effective healthcare, treatment and support is provided to Aboriginal communities and address the underlying causes of substance abuse," states Betty Kennedy, Executive Director of ONWA. "It is time for active engagement and meaningful consultation between our communities, organizations and governments to develop a culturally relevant and gender balanced strategy that will break the cycle of addiction and provide long-term recovery and healing for our families and communities."

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