

OCRINT Newsletter: 2024 Recap

CRISM's Name Change: A Shift Toward Inclusivity

The **CRISM Network** has undergone a name change to better reflect its mission and values.

- **English:** The "Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse" is now the "**Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Matters**". The acronym "CRISM" remains the same.
- **French:** The previous "Initiative de Recherche Canadienne sur les Impacts des Substances psychoactives en abus de substance" has been updated to "**Initiative de Recherche Canadienne sur les Impacts des Substances psychoactives**" (Canadian Research Initiative on the Impacts of Psychoactive Substances). The new acronym is "**ICRIS**".g

New Federal Funding: Supporting Research and Engagement

We're thrilled to announce **\$6 million in new funding** from the federal government to advance CRISM's work:

- **\$4 million** for the establishment of a **Network Coordinating Centre** to enhance knowledge mobilization, training, clinical trials, and guideline development.
- **\$2 million** for the creation of an **Indigenous Engagement Platform** led by Dr. Robert Henry (Prairies Node), aimed at amplifying Indigenous voices and research priorities.

These initiatives will drive meaningful progress in substance use research and community engagement. [Read the official press release.](#)

Community Competition Grants: Demonstration Projects Underway

1. Beyond Program Outcomes: The Lived Experience of Safer Supply in Northern Ontario

Principal Investigator: Dr. Abigale Sprakes

Thunder Bay, with Ontario's highest overdose rates in 2021, launched a Safer Supply Program (SSP) at NorWest Community Health Centres in 2022. This study explores the program's impact on participants' well-being and quality of life. Findings from interviews (n=20) will provide greater insights into participants' lived experiences and inform the development and evaluation of SSP in Northern Ontario and beyond.

2. Sanctioned Inhalation Sites in Hospital Settings

Principal Investigator: Dr. Yasser Ismail

Casey House, a Toronto hospital specializing in care for people with HIV/AIDS, introduced Ontario's first indoor supervised inhalation site in 2022. Dr. Ismail's project, launched in 2024, leverages an advisory committee of people who use drugs (PWUD) to improve harm reduction

services. Early findings highlight how to enhance supervised inhalation support in hospital settings, with a final report expected in 2025.

3. The Four Pillar Model: Community-Led Capacity Building

This initiative empowers people with lived and living experience of drug use to influence substance use strategies, by collaborating with key partners such as ONPUD, ODPRN, Canadian Aids Society, and Northumberland Drug Strategy. It focuses on assessing the Four Pillar Model (Harm Reduction, Treatment, Prevention and Enforcement) and fostering community-driven solutions by conducting priority-setting workshops. The project aims to identify key priorities for drug strategies and develop a creative model for multi-stakeholder workshops.

Policy Monitoring in Ontario

In collaboration with Toronto Public Health, the OCRINT team is evaluating the upcoming closure of ‘The Works’ **Supervised Consumption Site (SCS)** in March 2025 and exploring potential relocation strategies to ensure continuity of essential services.

Under the leadership of Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi, interviews are being conducted with both clients and service providers at SCSs to assess the potential impacts of site closures. The insights gathered aim to guide evidence-based policymaking and support informed decisions that prioritize public health and community well-being.

Additionally, OCRINT researchers are set to launch a new project in early 2025 to examine the impacts of reduced funding and program closures for **Safer Opioid Supply (SOS)** initiatives across the province. Through interviews with SOS program clients, the study aims to provide critical insights to inform future policies and sustain support for those affected.

2024 CRISM National Highlights

BC Drug Decriminalization Policy

Evaluating BC’s novel decriminalization policy, with early insights from the first year of implementation shared in publications and presentations, which can be found [online](#).

New Guidelines for Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

CRISM developed a [High Risk Drinking and Alcohol Use Disorder Canadian Clinical Guideline](#) and released recommendations for managing AUD. These resources aim to increase awareness and implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Updated Guidelines for the Clinical Management of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

We are pleased to announce that CRISM has updated the original guideline developed in 2018 to



include recent research, clinical insights, and input from individuals with lived experience. Read the updated guideline and related resources [here](#).

Publications

For more details on our 2024 publications and ongoing projects, visit the [OCRINT website](#).

Join the OCRINT Network

Do you know someone interested in joining the OCRINT community? [Sign up here](#) to stay connected.

Warm regards and Happy Holidays,

The OCRINT Team