



Training Workshop on the Global Synthetic Drug Monitoring Programme: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme

Submitted by: Mr. Troy Wickham, Deputy Manager, NCSA.

The scenic Regional Police Training Centre located at Seawell, Christ Church was the venue for a workshop for law enforcement, customs and first responders to sensitize and update them on issues relating to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Sixty (60) persons from thirteen (13) organizations were exposed to the training which was conducted from 27 to 29 January 2020.

This 'Training Workshop on the Global Synthetic Drug Monitoring Program: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme', was hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in conjunction with the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) and the Canadian Border Security Agency (CBSA). The focus of this very important exercise was the identification of Synthetic Drugs/Precursors and Security Measures. The SMART programme is designed to enhance the capacity of targeted Member States in priority regions by providing technical support to laboratory personnel, law enforcement and research officers and to generate and use synthetic drug information for effective policy design and programme interventions.

The feature address was delivered by



the Honourable Edmund G. Hinkson, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs. He encouraged the participants to make good on the knowledge they received and to use it to help Barbados and by extension the region, in the fight against amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Ambassador Marie Legault, High Commissioner of Canada to Barbados and Mr. Luis Eduardo Ruiz Estribi, the Global SMART Programme Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime gave moving remarks on the importance of the training to the fight against amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) to the region and to the world.

What is the 'SMART' Programme?

The expansion of the global synthetic drugs market, including amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), is a recent phenomenon and is of great concern for us locally.



THE FOREWORD

Coping during Covid

Submitted by: Mr. Mark Maynard, Board Member, NCSA.

Life can change so quickly and it sometimes does. Circumstances are rolling happily along when all of a sudden it's all changed - turned upside down. So it is with the virus known as COVID-19. No matter what social level or lifestyle each of us had become accustomed to; no matter what state of health mentally or physically we were experiencing, no one was exempt from some level of impact when the Corona Virus made its unwelcome entry onto our shores. And that meant that those who were more physically well positioned or mentally so, and, dare I say, spiritually so positioned would have had a leg up on those who were not. As an older person, I was keenly aware of how important it would be for those such as myself, to insulate and isolate ourselves during this time. It therefore became vital to be aware of the fact that the virus had its strength built on a foundation of opportunism. Therefore, like all those whose state of health included some kind of pre-existing condition, certain steps had to be taken and these included following the protocols established by science and Government. As this was not a contagion blown on the wind, but a purposeful, fierce and deadly viral infection, transmitted by droplets from the mouths and noses, hands and objects of those who were infected even if they were asymptomatic.

In an effort to control the spread of the illness, a number of health protocols were implemented and we were all encouraged to stay-at-home, self-isolate, practice social-distancing, wear a mask

and hand sanitize. The cumulative impact of such a decree was manifested in many and varied ways beyond our imagining and as a result we were forced to adjust our lifestyles. In an effort to control the spread of the infection, persons were only allowed to shop for groceries, bank or pay bills on assigned days based on the alphabetical system, being elderly, or having a special need such as being physically challenged. Places of business were opened only for a limited period of time and needless to say, it created what old people used to call "federation". People stocked up on food items as if a tsunami, three perfect storms and an earthquake had all coincided in imminence and toilet paper sold out post-haste, a phenomenon that historians will ponder to explain for years to come. This panic shopping was occurring throughout the world but then came more of a panic-demic as persons were unable to replenish their food at the rate that their needs demanded.

Some, like myself, welcomed some of the protocols with open arms - I could take that long awaited holiday that I had been putting off for the last ten years, I could be still from jumping from one project to another, I could spend quality time with my wife in empty-nest heaven. However, not everyone viewed this period in the same light and many became edgy, nervous, worried and depressed. Now consider, if that were the plight of average healthy people seeking not to have their way of life disrupted, what it could possibly be like

for a marijuana dependent individual, a cocaine-addicted patient with no or limited opportunity to make money from their daily hustle in order to support their habit. If people were "freaking out" about the prospect of running out of sugar, imagine the plight of someone running out of their daily intake "of a coupla bottles of rum" taken in measured doses of course? Or the dilemma of the street vagrant who would beg passers-by for "a dollah fa seh in tuh eat... I ain eat nuttin yet today", in the pretext to get money for a hit of their drug of choice - and found a ghost town! 



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ATS are a group of substances including amphetamine, methamphetamine and ecstasy-type substances. After cannabis, ATS are the second most widely used drugs in the world, with use levels often exceeding those of heroin and/or cocaine. In recent years, NPS such as synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, phenethylamines, and others, have established themselves on the drug market.

The aims of the Global SMART Programme include: capacity-building, delivering detecting devices (TRUNARC), increasing the understanding of the synthetic drug problem, workshops, webinars and support for evidence-based policies and developing Early Warning Systems. During the training exercise, participants were exposed to Drug Identification, Concealment Methods, Precursor Chemicals, Profiling Techniques, Interview Techniques and Safety Protocols surrounding the handling of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

For organizations on the Demand Reduction and Supplies Control of the drug fight, the synthetic drugs market presents a complex challenge since starting materials and the manufacturing processes are diverse. The manufacture is not geographically constrained which permits a wide array of substances to be manufactured over a short period of time. Trafficking routes and use patterns change rapidly and most substances are not under international control. Identification and analysis of NPS may require advanced forensic capacity, which many of our neighbors throughout the region do not have the facilities or the requisite training to cope. This therefore emphasises the need for training exercises such as this one.

The NCSA's Response

Though the Research Department of the NCSA has not seen wide-spread use of synthetic drugs and NPS, we are being proactive in our response to the synthetic

drug problem and as such launched our Early Warning System in November, 2019. An Early Warning System (EWS) is a multidisciplinary network which collects, appraises and rapidly disseminates information on the use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Therefore, the success of the

Early Warning System (EWS), hinges on capacity building for all stakeholders in the fight against amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

This workshop has provided the opportunity to concretize our Early Warning System (EWS), showed us how to develop the tools necessary to make several strides in the right direction toward success in the fight against amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and New Psychoac



Cross-section of the participants who attended the training workshop on the "Global Synthetic Drug Monitoring Programme" which was held at the Regional Police Training Centre.

tive Substances (NPS). Feedback from the participants who attended this training workshop indicated that the experience was timely and they were grateful to be exposed to the training and they would be using it in their day-to-day jobs.

We at the NCSA express sincere thanks to all the parties and organizations which made this venture a huge success.



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Highlights from Project SOFT 2019 Graduation Ceremony

Submitted by: Mrs. Makeada Bourne, Community Programme Officer, NCSA.

Technology found its way into the graduation ceremony of Project Safeguarding Our Future Today (Project SOFT) 2019. The aim of Project SOFT is to increase the protective factors of 11-year-old students transitioning from primary school to secondary school, in order to prevent or delay the onset of drug use or abuse. The four-month programme includes a residential week for the children during the month of August and at the culmination of the camp, there are follow-up sessions held between the period September – December.

As was done for the past 16 years, the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) hosted a graduation ceremony for the participants of Project SOFT in the training room of the NCSA on May 28, 2020. Usually, this event is attended by approximately 150 to 200 persons but in light of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Management of the NCSA made the decision to video record the event and capture the proceedings with still photos. Twelve persons attended the graduation ceremony and everyone in attendance adhered to the COVID-19 protocols. The remaining participants unable to physically attend the ceremony, were invited to watch remotely on their electronic devices. Feedback from staff and family members indicated that the ceremony was viewed and enjoyed by all.

The feature address was delivered by Mr. Hadford Howell, Chairman of the NCSA Board of Directors. In his address, Mr. Howell stressed that “having healthy and positive family relationships should remain a focus of parents and guardians.

Encouraging children to be responsible in such an environment is also essential if there is to be love and harmony within the home.” The chairman explained that the graduates would have participated in a variety of life skills sessions including: effective communication, values, social graces, etiquette, relationship building, self-discipline, self-esteem, co-operation, bullying avoidance, and staying drug-free.” He went on to encourage all to include the values of “sharing, caring and helping” to their skill set. The parents and guardians of the participants were also exposed to life skills and socio-development sessions. He further stated that the skills learnt during the Project SOFT programme could be used to help the children and their families cope with the constant changes that were occurring as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the graduation ceremony, participants were recognized for their



Javonte Forde who emerged “Top Boy” at Project SOFT Camp accepting his prize from Mr. Hadford Howell, NCSA Board Chairman

outstanding achievements and received prizes in the following categories: helpfulness, honesty, campers’ choice and caterer’s choice. Javonte Forde and Terhya Griffith emerged the Top Boy and Top Girl respectively, while the runner-up Top Boy was Naeem Phillips and the runner-up Top Girl was Jalana Eastmond.

The awardees received a selection of prizes from the City of Bridgetown Credit Union, Duty Free Caribbean Cave Shepherd, Arthur Moore Pest Control and the NCSA. The children received

their prizes in the presence of Mr. Howell, Mrs. Betty Hunte, Manager, NCSA; Mr. Troy Wickham, Deputy Manager, NCSA and Mrs. Makeada Bourne, Community Programme Officer and Project SOFT Camp Coordinator, NCSA. Certificates and other prizes were mailed to the remaining graduates. 



Terhya Griffith who emerged “Top Girl” at Project SOFT Camp accepting her prize from Mrs. Betty Hunte, Manager, NCSA.

Tobacco and waterpipe use increases the risk of suffering from COVID-19

Tobacco use may increase the risk of suffering from serious symptoms due to COVID-19 illness. Early research indicates that, compared to non-smokers, having a history of smoking may substantially increase the chance of adverse health outcomes for COVID-19 patients, including being admitted to intensive care, requiring mechanical ventilation and suffering severe health consequences.

Smoking is already known to be a risk-factor for many other respiratory infections, including colds, influenza, pneumonia and tuberculosis. The effects of smoking on the respiratory system make it more likely that smokers contract these diseases, which could be more severe. Smoking is also associated with increased development of acute respiratory distress syndrome, a key complication for severe cases of COVID-19, among people with severe respiratory infections.

Any kind of tobacco smoking is harmful to the anatomy, including the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. COVID-19 can also harm these systems. Evidence from China, where COVID-19 originated, shows that people who have cardiovascular and respiratory conditions caused by tobacco use, are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 symptoms. Research on 55,924 laboratory confirmed cases show that the overall fatality rate for COVID-19 patients is much higher among those with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory disease or cancer than those with no pre-existing chronic medical conditions. This demonstrates that these pre-existing conditions may increase the

vulnerability of such individuals to COVID-19.

Tobacco use has a huge impact on respiratory health and is the most common cause of lung cancer. It is also the most important risk-factor for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which causes the swelling and rupturing of the air sacs in the lungs, reducing the lung's capacity to take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide, and the build-up of mucus, resulting in painful coughing and breathing difficulties. This may have implications for smokers given that the virus that causes COVID-19 primarily affects the respiratory system often causing mild to severe respiratory damage, which could result in fatality. However, given that COVID-19 is a newly identified virus, the link between tobacco use and the virus needs further documentation and research.

In addition, there is an increased risk of more serious symptoms and death among COVID-19 patients who have underlying conditions, including cardiovascular diseases (CVDs).



File image of a water pipe used to smoke tobacco or marijuana.



File image depicting the Surgeon General's Warning which usually appears on cigarette boxes.

The virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is from the same family as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV), both of which have been associated with cardiovascular damage (either acute or chronic). There is also evidence that COVID-19 patients that have more severe symptoms often have heart-related complications. This relationship between COVID-19 and cardiovascular health is important because tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke are major causes of cardiovascular diseases globally. The effect of COVID-19 on the cardiovascular system could therefore make pre-existing cardiovascular conditions worse. Additionally, a weaker cardiovascular system among COVID-19 patients with a history of tobacco use could make such patients more vulnerable to severe symptoms, thereby increasing the health risk for these patients. 

Retrieved from website:
<http://www.emro.who.int/tfi/know-the-truth/tobacco-and-waterpipe-users-are-at-increased-risk-of-covid-19-infection>.



NCSA Celebrates Brian “Bumba” Payne

Submitted by: Ms. Paulavette Atkinson, Programme Officer, NCSA.

Celebration was definitely in the air, and fun and food were on the menu when the Management and Staff of the National Council on Substance Abuse held a surprise function on Friday, February 28th, 2020 in recognition of the Retirement of long-standing colleague and friend – Brian “Bumba” Payne after almost twenty-five years of unbroken service to the people of our nation.

Laughter, tears and endless hugs abounded throughout the event, as staff member after staff member vividly recalled their most cherished experiences with Brian. Memories of those first years at the National Drug Resource Centre (NDRC), the facility at Trents, St. James which was the original home of the NCSA, came flooding back as if it was only yesterday! From the street marches during Child Month, to ambush theatre on World No-Tobacco Day, promoting drug and HIV awareness during Crop Over, youth interventions in Queens Park and karaoke right on the corner of James Street and Roebuck Street (before our relocation to Belleville and Pine Road, St. Michael).

But how does one even begin to encapsulate the many sides of Brian “Bumba” Payne?! Entertainer, educator, song-writer, brother, friend, confidante – he is a man of boundless energy whose talents could never be hidden under a bushel. B. Payne as he is fondly referred to at the NCSA, can be aptly described as an “all-rounder”. In addition to his calm demeanor, warm smile, down-to-earth engaging personality and an illustrious career in the calypso arena, he also amassed diverse academic accomplishments including a Masters of



Mr. Brian “Bumba” Payne retired from the NCSA after more than two decades of active service as Drug Education Officer (Secondary Schools).

Science degree in the field of Counselling Psychology. In this regard, he easily formed and maintained strong associations with social workers, guidance counselors principals and teachers whom he readily assisted in delivering the Health & Family Life Education (HFLE) programme.

On any other given day, B. Payne would be found out-and-about in the secondary and vocational institutions across Barbados delivering DELLS – the holistic drug education and life skills programme he conceptualized and developed for adolescent and school-based populations.

Through DELLS, Brian has been able to utilize his prolific musical talent to develop and incorporate rhythm poetry into universal drug education, as well as to use culture and the performing arts like dance and drama as a dynamic way to connect with youth.



Brian always participated in all of the activities during NCSA's Fun Day which is an interagency annual event held as part of the Drug Awareness Month activities.

Even in the time leading up to his last days in office, Brian was still doing what he loves most during a Guidance Counselors' Workshop at the NCSA, that is educating others eager to know about new approaches to preventing drug use amongst our youth - he even made time to personally extend support to the family of a dearly departed friend.

It has still not yet sunken in that Brian Payne has officially "retired" from Team NCSA. Not hearing his voice on the other end of the phone afterhours; no longer having him accompany you to your vehicle when working late in the evenings, or having him be the first to volunteer with the delivery of community outreach during Drug Awareness Month and special international days, are now only fond memories to cherish forever! 



Mrs. Betty Hunte, Manager, NCSA presenting Mr. Brian Payne with his retirement cake during the farewell function organized by the staff of the NCSA.



Brian would always have a Barbadian theme when he participated in the annual Christmas Door decorating competition.



From left: Mr. Brian Payne, Drug Education Officer, NCSA, Ms. Jakila Lewis, CBC News and Ms. Paulavette Atkinson, Programme Officer delivering drug education information to patrons at "Q" in the Community.



Drug Education Workshop for Guidance Counsellors

Submitted by: Ms. Jennifer Baptiste, Junior Programme Officer, NCSA.

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) hosted a Drug Education Workshop for Guidance Counsellors. The aim of the workshop was to provide information on emerging drug trends and new psychoactive substances. Guidance Counsellors attached to both primary and secondary schools attended the one-day workshop. Presentations included: New Psychoactive Substances, the Abuse of Synthetic Substances and their Effects, Identifying Drugs, and NCSA's Counselling

Services, to name a few. There was also an interactive session using the "goggles" which simulate the effects of being under the influence of a drug. President of the Guidance Counsellors Association, Mrs. Margaret Grant, stated that this workshop was particularly important as reports from Guidance Counsellors indicated that students are learning



Dr. Ronald Chase, Senior Registrar Psychiatrist - Psychiatric Hospital, facilitating a session at the Drug Education Workshop for Guidance Counsellors which was held at the National Council on Substance Abuse.



Ms. Grant, President - Guidance Counsellors Association speaking to the media about the importance of the information received during the workshop.

innovative ways to stash illegal drugs and "beat" drug tests. Ms. Grant also acknowledged that with the easy access to marijuana and other illicit substances, it was important for Guidance Counsellors to be

equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of substance use and address any resulting problematic behavioral issues. 

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Highlights from Project SOFT

Before I end this article, I must take time out to thank the parents and guardians for trusting the NCSA with their children, especially during the residential component. I must also recognize the sponsors of 2019, whose contributions made the implementation of the programme possible. Armstrong Agencies, Arthur Moore Pest

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