

For immediate release: November 28, 2005

AIDS-RELATED DEATHS QUADRUPLE SINCE WORLD AIDS DAY '04 AT VANCOUVER'S ONLY HIV/AIDS CARE RESIDENCE

*- CURRENT INCREASE IN ILLNESS AND DEATH ARE AFTERMATH
FOLLOWING DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE HIV INFECTION RATE AT
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY LEVELS 10 YEARS AGO -*

Vancouver, BC – The Dr. Peter Centre Residence, the only HIV/AIDS 24-hour care residence in the province, has seen the number of deaths in its facility quadruple since World AIDS Day '04.

From World AIDS Day '03 to World AIDS Day '04, there were three deaths and 28 admissions to the 24-suite residence. From World AIDS Day '04 to World AIDS Day '05, there have been 31 admissions with 14 deaths; more than quadruple the deaths in the year previous because more people are seriously ill.

“In only two years since the new Dr. Peter Centre opened, the change has been dramatic. The residents have far more complex care needs and we are providing much more palliative care,” says Maxine Davis, executive director of the Dr. Peter Centre. “The individuals most affected have profound long-standing addictions.”

In 1996, the Downtown Eastside was considered to have the highest rate of HIV infection in the Western world and was declared a public health emergency. The recent increase in serious illnesses and deaths among illicit drug users correlates with the 10-12 year life expectancy for a person living with HIV and not taking, or inconsistently taking anti-retro-virals (ARVs). In the last five years, the infection rate has not declined significantly; there is no end in sight for the serious illnesses and deaths unless the infection rate can be dramatically reduced.

Dr. Julio Montaner, Director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, continues: “The Dr. Peter Residence experience is a microcosm of the reality of the AIDS epidemic in Vancouver. Drug users infected in the early to mid-nineties, who have been less able to manage the medications, are experiencing a serious decline in health. Those who make it to the Dr. Peter Centre are fortunate; many more are dying outside of any supportive health care setting.”

Approaching this World AIDS Day, Maxine Davis notes, “There needs to be more capacity to provide 24-hour care to individuals who are essentially dying of neglect. We need to embark on a rapid expansion of residential care capacity. The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation is committed to helping make this happen.”

Currently, there are 11,000 people living with HIV in B.C. Recent statistics show that in B.C. more than one person per day contracts HIV. It is estimated that in Downtown Eastside, there are at least 1,300 HIV positive residents who should be on the ARVs medications and are not.

More on these statistics will be released at the 2nd Annual Reality Check: HIV/AIDS Today in B.C. hosted by the Dr. Peter Centre, Thursday, December 1st, 7:45-8:45 a.m.

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Dr. Peter Centre

Dr. Peter Centre is the only HIV/AIDS day health program and 24-hour care residence in B.C. It offers care and support to improve the overall health and quality of life of people most in need. The centre's innovative programs rely on both donor and government funding to serve the growing need for HIV/AIDS care in our communities.

B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

The B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS is a key provincial resource seeking to improve the health of people with HIV through the development, ongoing monitoring and dissemination of comprehensive investigative and treatment programs for HIV and related diseases.

See attached advisory for more information on WORLD AIDS DAY events at the Dr. Peter Centre.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

EXPERTS TO DECLARE VANCOUVER EXPERIENCING SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN HIV/AIDS-RELATED ILLNESSES AND DEATHS

Vancouver, B.C. - Dr. Peter Centre is hosting the second annual **Reality Check: HIV/AIDS Today in B.C.** to mark World AIDS Day 2005.

This will be the premier source for information on HIV/AIDS in our province today.

There will be a keynote address by Julio Montaner, MD, Director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. Maxine Davis, Executive Director of the Dr. Peter Centre, will also speak.

The Honourable Hedy Fry, MP Vancouver Centre, is scheduled to speak.

Tiko Kerr, a renowned local artist, who is HIV-positive, will unveil a recently commissioned painting for the Dr. Peter Centre.

EVENT: 2ND Annual Reality Check: HIV/AIDS Today in B.C.

DATE: Thursday, December 1st

TIME: 7:45-8:45 a.m.

LOCATION: Dr. Peter Centre, 1110 Comox Street, Vancouver, B.C. 604-608-1874

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Maxine Davis, Executive Director of the Dr. Peter Centre, and Julio Montaner, Director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, are available for interviews in advance of and on Thursday, December 1st, World AIDS Day.

Dr. Peter Centre is the only HIV/AIDS day health program and 24-hour care residence in B.C.

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