



MEDIA RELEASE DRAFT

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ADDRESSING THE LINK BETWEEN ATHLETES AND ADDICTION

Sydney, Australia, 13 November – The connection between high sensation-seeking athletes and drug and alcohol addicts comes down to brain chemistry, according to Psychologist Cameron Brown, an Australian-based psychologist specialising in aftercare support for returned clients of The Cabin Chiang Mai, a leading drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility in Thailand.

At the 2012 Swinburne University Sport and Recreation Conference held in Melbourne this week, Australian psychologists, academics and healthcare professionals will address how the scientific causes for drug and alcohol addiction suggests why some athletes turn to drug and alcohol abuse.

International research conducted by the National Institute of Drug Abuse in America¹ and medical bodies such as the American Society of Addiction Medicine² support that dopamine, a chemical associated with the brain's pleasure reward system, can play a major role in addiction.

Both athletes and drug and alcohol addicts may be hyper-stimulated by unique experiences because their brains release more dopamine during these events, leaving them wanting to come back for more, according to Cameron Brown

“Sports athletes get natural adrenalines from physical activity and personal achievement like winning a championship or scoring a goal. Physical exercise elicits a rise in midbrain dopamine tone in the same way many drugs like alcohol, methamphetamine and cocaine do” Brown said.

“But sometimes tolerance to brain excitation from sports may lead to a reliance on similar experiences to perpetuate these brain reward responses.

“Most athletes do not have an issue with this, however in my experience some may revert to using drugs and alcohol as a way of reaching a balance in neurochemicals, which at first works, however when it continues can manifest in addictive behaviour,”.

Over one-third of the patients treated at The Cabin Chiang Mai are Australian. Joseph*, a professional sportsman originally from the United States who currently lives in Australia, checked into The Cabin in September this year with a ten year history of cocaine abuse.



Joseph did well at School, excelling at sports. He was an all-round good student until age 18, when he began drinking alcohol and very quickly became a problem drinker, leading to violent confrontations and other destructive situations.

Sport was a constant in his life. He became involved in competitive sports and eventually transitioned into coaching quite early in his career. This helped to shelter Joseph from some of the consequences of his drug addiction, and he was rewarded in his role with respectability and huge financial benefits.

Joseph became obsessed with training and competing, ensuring that he continued the excitement that he had built through sport and his association with it, and in fact the sport became an addiction in itself.

Cameron Brown said, “We often see sports stars as infallible and role models, however we don't see what happens behind the scenes and that they are humans like the rest of us. Increased social demands from fans, sporting bodies and clubs can lead to athletes hiding their drug use until the damage is so extensive that it is difficult to rectify”.

After completing a six week stay at The Cabin Chiang Mai, Joseph has now successfully completed his treatment at The Cabin and has returned to Australia refocused on a new career.

“The important thing for athletes to realise is that these addictions can be overcome, and The Cabin work closely with their clients to identify alternative activities which take them away from their usual setting, routine and addiction triggers,” concluded Brown.

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*For more information, or to speak with Cameron Brown please contact **Edelman Healthcare***

*This name has been changed to protect the identity of the client

Christie Galloway, Account Manager
+61 (02) 9291 3368, Christie.galloway@edelman.com

Amy Sanders, Account Executive
+61 (02) 9291 3364, amy.sanders@edelman.com

About the Cabin

The Cabin Chiang Mai is Asia's most respected Drug and Alcohol treatment centre, with two facilities and a secondary treatment Sober House located in Chiang Mai. Since 2009 the Cabin has treated over 300 men and women from around the world with a programme completion rate of 96% and a recovery rate amongst the highest in the world.



The unique programme at The Cabin combines CBT, the 12 Steps, mind mapping, mindfulness therapy and physical exercise therapy. A fully inclusive 28 day programme at The Cabin Chiang Mai costs \$12,000, about a third of the cost of private rehabs in Australia.

Cameron Brown is the aftercare provider and evidence based researcher of The Cabin Chiang Mai. He is a registered Psychologist with the Psychology Board of Australia and an Associate Member of the Australian Psychological Society. Having served on site as The Cabin's psychologist, he is now based on the Gold Coast Australia, where he offers ongoing psychological support to addicts in recovery returning from The Cabin.

www.thecabinchiangmai.com

¹ <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>

² <http://www.asam.org/research-treatment/definition-of-addiction>