



OVERDOSE DEATHS PREVENTED BY INSITE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Prompt medical attention at Insite, North America's first supervised injection facility, has prevented up to 12 overdose deaths per year over the last four years, according to a new study.
- Using data from the facility and the scientific literature, the authors estimated how many non-fatal overdoses in the facility would have been fatal had they happened in the community.

QUICK FACT

USING A MATHEMATICAL SIMULATION MODEL, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT BETWEEN 8.4 AND 50.9 DEATHS WERE AVERTED BETWEEN MARCH 1, 2004 AND JULY 1, 2008.

FINDINGS

- Using a mathematical simulation model, the authors calculated that between 8.4 and 50.9 deaths were averted between March 1, 2004 and July 1, 2008.
- The study authors observed that overdose was a common occurrence at Insite, with more than 1,000 events over the study period.
- In 68% of the ODs, heroin was the primary substance used; second was cocaine at 17%.
- Over the study period, 453 ODs were serious enough to require a 9-1-1 call, an ambulance, or the administration of naloxone, a powerful anti-overdose medication.

IMPLICATIONS

- Overdose is the cause of a substantial amount of death and disability among injection drug users in Vancouver and around the world. Efforts to lower the risk of death from overdose are central to attempts to reduce the harm from using injection drugs.
- After peaking at over 200 in Vancouver in 1998, the number of overdose deaths in the Downtown Eastside has averaged approximately 35 over the past five years.
- Along with the goals of reducing risks for HIV infection and increasing use of addiction treatment, Insite was established to lower the likelihood of death from overdose.

Milloy M-J, Kerr T, Tyndall M, Montaner J, Wood E. **Estimated drug overdose deaths averted by North America's first medically-supervised safer injection facility.** *PLoS ONE*, 2008; 3(10): e3351.

