



INABILITY TO ACCESS ADDICTION TREATMENT INCREASES HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOUR AND RISK OF HIV INFECTION AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- For people who inject drugs (IDU), treatment for drug use is recognized as an effective way of preventing HIV infection.
- Vancouver's supervised injection facility (SIF) has been shown to increase enrollment in drug treatment among IDU.
- We conducted this study to identify why some IDU who use the SIF do not access treatment for drug use.
- Between 2004 and 2006 we recruited 889 IDU using Insite.
- We asked how many IDU had tried and been unable to access treatment for drug or alcohol use in the previous six months.

QUICK FACT

CURRENT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO ENACT MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES FOR DRUG USE MIGHT PROMOTE HIGH-RISK SYRINGE SHARING AND HIV TRANSMISSION.

FINDINGS

- Out of the 889 people who took part in the study, over 30% of all participants reported trying and being unable to access treatment.
- Individuals who reported that they had been incarcerated were more likely to also report being unable to access addiction treatment.
- Higher levels of used syringe borrowing were also reported among people unable to access treatment.

IMPLICATIONS

- Despite the success of Insite at getting IDU into addiction treatment, there remains a group of high-risk drug users who still face barriers to treatment.
- The study clearly shows that imprisoning drug users interrupts access to needed medical services, including addiction treatment.
- Our study suggests that current federal government initiatives to enact mandatory minimum sentences for drug use might promote high-risk syringe sharing and HIV transmission.

Milloy M-J, Kerr T, Zhang R, Tyndall M, Montaner JS, Wood E. **Inability to access addiction treatment and risk of HIV infection among injection drug users recruited from a supervised injection facility.** *Journal of Public Health*, 2010; 32(3): 342-349.

