



INSITE USERS NOT MORE LIKELY TO OVERDOSE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- The sharp rise in the number of overdose deaths in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in the mid-1990s was one of the reasons why Insite, a supervised injection facility, was opened in 2003.
- Although the number of fatal and non-fatal overdoses has dropped since the late 1990s, non-fatal overdoses are still common. Not only do they cause substantial suffering, but they also place a large burden on local emergency response and health-care systems.
- Although no overdose at Insite has resulted in death, non-fatal overdose is a fairly common occurrence there (roughly 13 for every 10,000 injections).
- Some people have suggested that Insite may actually lead to more overdoses by giving local drug users a safe place to inject and perhaps thereby encouraging them to use higher doses of drugs.
- Researchers tested this idea by examining data from surveys of more than one thousand Insite users over a two-year period.

FINDINGS

- The study found that about one in ten clients of Insite suffer a non-fatal overdose every six months.
- The study also found that drug users who used Insite for 75% or more of their injections were not more likely to report non-fatal overdose than drug users who used Insite less often.
- People who used heroin at least daily were more likely to report overdose, as were those who used drugs in public, needed help injecting, or were involved in the sex trade.
- A significant finding was that drug users being treated with methadone were less likely to overdose than those not receiving the treatment.

QUICK FACT

INSITE CLIENTS WHO USED INSITE FOR 75% OR MORE OF THEIR INJECTIONS WERE NOT MORE LIKELY TO REPORT NON-FATAL OVERDOSE THAN THOSE WHO USED INSITE LESS OFTEN.

IMPLICATIONS

- These findings support the expansion of methadone treatment as a way to reduce drug-related harms, including overdose.
- Public health officials should also identify and try to remove barriers to methadone treatment faced by local sex workers, who are at greater risk of overdose.

Milloy M-J S, Kerr T, Mathias R, Zhang R, Montaner JS, Tyndall M, Kerr T. **Non-fatal overdose among a cohort of active injection drug users recruited from a supervised injection facility.** *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 2008; 34(4): 499-509.

