



THE IMPACT OF A DRUG USER-RUN OUTREACH-BASED SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- In 2000, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) initiated a drug user-run outreach based syringe exchange program (SEP) called the Alley Patrol in response to a growing HIV epidemic among people who inject drugs in Vancouver.
- Approximately 20 Alley Patrol volunteers have provided services to people who inject drugs on streets and in alleyways. The services included: handing out clean syringes, other injection equipment, and condoms; collecting used syringes; and providing harm reduction education.
- This study was conducted to evaluate the impact and reach of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP.
- Over a period of 3 years following the launch of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP, we interviewed 854 people who inject drugs in Vancouver.
- We asked them about drug use patterns and whether they accessed the Alley Patrol SEP.



QUICK FACT

*THE VANDU ALLEY PATROL SEP
REACHED A GROUP OF PEOPLE
WHO INJECT DRUGS WHO WERE
AT HIGH RISK FOR
HIV INFECTION AND
REDUCED NEEDLE
REUSE AMONG THESE
INDIVIDUALS.*

FINDINGS

- Between 2000 and 2003, 27.3% of the study participants reported use of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP.
- These individuals tended to live in unstable housing, inject heroin or cocaine every day, and inject drugs in public; and were less likely to reuse their syringes.

IMPLICATIONS

- The VANDU Alley Patrol SEP was effective in delivering sterile syringes and harm reduction education to people who inject drugs that are at high risk for HIV infection.
- This form of peer-based SEP helps extend the reach of HIV prevention programs by contacting people who inject drugs traditionally underserved by conventional services.

Hayashi K, Wood E, Wiebe L, Qi J, Kerr T. An external evaluation of a peer-run outreach-based syringe exchange in Vancouver, Canada. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 2010; 21(5): 418-421.