



INCREASED DRUG USE AROUND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Research has linked the timing of social assistance payments to spikes in drug-related harm, such as overdose.
- This study was done to see how people’s drug use changes around social assistance payments.
- We wanted to know whether and how people increased their drug use, and if increases were different for different drugs.
- We asked 2661 people from three studies with people who use drugs in Vancouver (ARYS, ACCESS, & VIDUS) about their drug use in the past week and in the past six months.
- We looked at how often and what drugs they used
- We compared use on the days around social assistance payments and drug use at other times of the month.

QUICK FACT

PAST STUDIES HAVE SHOW THAT PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DO NOT USE MORE DRUGS, BUT PAYMENTS MAY INFLUENCE WHEN AND HOW THEY USE THEM.

Social assistance is an important resource for people living in poverty. It may also act as a cue for drug use and unintentionally add to drug-related harm.

FINDINGS

- People’s drug use increased a lot after receipt of social assistance payments.
- People’s drug use also decreased in the 7-10 days before payments.

IMPLICATIONS

- This study highlights the need for payment systems that reduce monthly increases in drug-related harm.
- We need to test if varying the timing and/or frequency of payments works better for people.

Krebs E, Wang L, Olding M, DeBeck K, Hayashi K, Milloy MJ, Wood E, Nosyk B, Richardson L. Increased drug use and the timing of social assistance receipt among people who use illicit drugs. *Social Science & Medicine*, 2016; 171: 94-102.

