

Keeping Up with the Evidence: Issue 6

Background

Highlights and references of recent publications related to HIV and other STBBIs, harm reduction, and other related work.

A sampling of evidence

This issue of Keeping Up With the Evidence provides a sampling of articles relevant to ACCH members activities. This selection cuts across various topics, including drug checking, peer workers, and safer smoking supplies.

Drug checking services at a Vancouver SCS (Karamouzian et al., 2018)

Summary: This article discussed results of a study looking at the potential uptake and benefits of drug checking services at supervised consumption sites. The study was conducted at Insite in Vancouver and is based on a pilot project where clients were offered the opportunity to test their drugs for fentanyl. Results indicate that while a small proportion of clients used the service, a high percentage of samples tested were positive for fentanyl. While this did not lead to an increase in drug disposal, it did correlate with lower dosages taken and a reduction in risks of overdose.

Implications: This article provides material to include into planning for potential drug checking services. It does raise the point that clients are reluctant to dispose of their drugs even if they test positive for fentanyl. Testing after consumption also provides useful information to the user who may be able to adjust behavior and dosage in the future.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0252-8>

Reference: Karamouzian, M., Dohoo, C., Forsting, S., McNeil, R., Kerr, T., & Lysyshyn, M. (2018). Evaluation of a fentanyl drug checking service for clients of a supervised injection facility, Vancouver, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 15(1), 46. doi:10.1186/s12954-018-0252-8

Case study in transition to peer worker (Tookey et al., 2018)

Summary: This article relates the result of a case study relaying the experiences of two persons with lived experiences who became peer worker within a Hep C community-based program. The article is rich in direct quotes and in relaying the voices of the people studied. The case studies point to a series of recommendations in relation to the integration of past clients as peer workers, including flexible responsibilities, sufficient transition, broad qualification criteria, and harm reduction support.

Implications: While this article is of limited use in providing strong evidence because of its limitations (based on a case studies of two individuals, therefore highly anecdotal), it remains a good portrayal of

experiences in transitions from clients to peer workers. It could be of interest to organizations seeking to improve their processes of hiring people with lived experience as peer workers.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0245-7>

Reference: Tookey, P., Mason, K., Broad, J., Behm, M., Bondy, L., & Powis, J. (2018). From client to co-worker: a case study of the transition to peer work within a multi-disciplinary hepatitis c treatment team in Toronto, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 15(1), 41. doi:10.1186/s12954-018-0245-7

Pain management and substance use ((Voon et al., 2018)

Summary: In this other study conducted in British Columbia, the researchers sought to better understand how pain management for people who use drugs could be a source of risk. They conducted a series of focus groups with PWUDs asking about issues relating to pain management. They conclude that various policies and practices surrounding pain management can lead to an inadequate management of pain within official health services and guide PWUDs to using riskier alternatives.

Implications: While aiming at influencing wider policies, the findings presented in this paper can be relevant to community-based organizations presenting principles of harm reduction to third parties, or in explaining the intricacies of the issues they are dealing with.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0241-y>

Reference: Voon, P., Greer, A. M., Amlani, A., Newman, C., Burmeister, C., & Buxton, J. A. (2018). Pain as a risk factor for substance use: a qualitative study of people who use drugs in British Columbia, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 15(1), 35. doi:10.1186/s12954-018-0241-y

Safer smoking kits, pipe sharing and risky sex (Hunter, 2012)

Summary: This older article discusses the result of a study where users were asked about potential reduction in some behaviours because of access to safer smoking supplies for methamphetamine. One of the main findings of the study is that clients saw pipe sharing as integral to smoking in groups and that having increased access to pipes was unlikely to decrease sharing. Furthermore, for some clients, the risks associated with pipe sharing were less important than those related to the unprotected sex behaviours which would occur while intoxicated. This leads the researchers to suggest that while further studies are warranted, a most important aspect of safer smoking supplies is that of accompanying health promotion and prevention information.

Implications: Organizations providing safer inhalation supplies should be aware of studies which show limited impact of supply distribution on sharing behaviour. It is important to remind interlocutor that these apply more to some segment of populations than others. As is described in the article, sharing of pipes may be more dangerous for low income or vulnerable individuals with higher risks of lip and mouth injuries. It also reinforces the need to accompany supplies with appropriate health information.

Link: <http://www.harmreductionjournal.com/content/9/1/9>



Reference: Hunter, C., Strike, Carol, Barnaby, Lorraine. (2012). Reducing widespread pipe sharing and risky sex among crystal methamphetamine smokers in Toronto: do safer smoking kits have a potential role to play? *Harm Reduction J*, 9(9).