

SCALING UP SUPERVISED CONSUMPTION AND OVERDOSE PREVENTION SERVICES: A RESPONSE TO CANADA'S DRUG POISONING CRISIS

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Background:

Supervised Consumption Sites (SCS) and Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) are spaces where individuals can use pre-obtained substances under supervision of trained staff. SCS/OPS are an important overdose and HIV/HCV prevention tool. A 2022 Toronto study investigated the correlation between HCV care and accessing SCS/OPS. Findings suggest integrated SCS models with co-located HCV services are effective in connecting people who use drugs to HCV care.

Description of model of care/intervention/program:

In 2002, the Dr. Peter Centre (DPC), an HIV healthcare facility, became the first in North America to incorporate SCS/OPS into its model of care. SCS/OPS expansion stalled in Canada from 2006-2015 due to government opposition. DPC's service was sanctioned by local government during this time and sanctioned by the federal government in 2016. DPC provided informal guidance to organizations wanting to initiate SCS/OPS services for many years. Expansion of SCS/OPS started in 2017 as the drug poisoning crisis expanded throughout Canada. In 2017, DPC received funding from the federal government to formally support organizations seeking models and support for emerging SCS/OPS services.

Effectiveness:

By designing capacity-building trainings, experiential learning opportunities, communities of practice, and issue-specific working groups, our project brought together a network of 600+ people working towards expanding SCS/OPS and the breadth of their services. Over the seven years of the project, Canada expanded from 10 SCS/OPS in Vancouver to 150+ sites nationally.

Conclusion and next steps:

Despite the expansion of SCS/OPS, our project uncovered gaps where many services lack culturally-responsive modes of service provision that reflect the realities of drug use culture, making them inaccessible for key populations, including Indigenous; African, Caribbean, Black; and women and gender-diverse communities. It also highlighted key services being left out such as inhalation services. This has become the focus of the project moving forward.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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