

Somerset West Community Health Centre Safe Inhalation Program Evaluation

Funding: AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The Ottawa Safe Inhalation Program (SIP), operating out of Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC), provides harm reduction services through a mobile site and through a number of fixed sites. These services include the distribution of safer inhalation equipment such as glass stems, protective mouthpieces, brass screens, push sticks and harm reduction education and support for women and men in Ottawa who smoke drugs. The goal of the SIP is to reduce the risk of infection with blood borne diseases, including the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The program was originally developed in April 2005 by Ottawa Public Health and subsequently administered by this Department until July 2007 when Ottawa City Council in its capacity as the Ottawa Board of Health withdrew its support of the program. ([More about the Ottawa Public Health Safer Crack Use Initiative](#))

In December 2007, upon receipt of a proposal by community agencies in Ottawa, the program was reinstated by Ontario's provincial government. The Safe Inhalation Program became fully operational when the mobile program first began distributing safer inhalation materials at the end of June 2008.

Objectives

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of SWCHC's Safe Inhalation Program in:

- Increasing the proportion of people using safer inhalation devices (e.g., glass stems, brass screens, mouthpieces and chopsticks) and engaging in safer practices to smoke crack;
- Reducing the proportion of people smoking crack with smoking devices that have been previously used; and
- Increasing the capacity of Ottawa community partners to deliver evidence-based harm reduction resources including safer inhalation supplies to people who smoke crack in Ottawa.

Methods

The evaluation consisted of two components.

The SIP Outcome Evaluation consisted of a questionnaire administered to people who smoke crack in order to describe the impact of the program on: *access to safer inhalation equipment; use of safer crack-smoking devices; multi-person use of devices to smoke crack; safer disposal of used equipment; uptake of testing for the presence of HIV and antibodies to the hepatitis C virus; referrals to appropriate services within the Ottawa region; and changes in service access of community agencies in the city of Ottawa.* The questionnaire collected data at four time points between 6 months prior and one year post-SIP implementation. In addition, two forms of biological specimen were collected from all consenting participants in order to measure HIV and HCV prevalence rates.

The SIP Process Evaluation documented the experiences and perspectives of community partner agencies in relation to the operation of the SIP including the effectiveness of the SWCHC to increase the capacity of community partners to deliver safer inhalation resources to people in Ottawa who smoke crack.

Results

Between September 2008 and June 2009, 750 men and women in Ottawa who smoke crack completed interviews and provided blood and saliva samples for HIV and HCV testing. For further detail about study findings, please refer to dissemination activities below.

More info

For more information contact:

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Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer

Lynne Leonard¹, Emily Medd¹, Andrée Germain¹, Charles Furlotte¹, Kate Smith¹ & Aideen Reynolds¹ (2011). *HIV- and HCV-related Practices Decline among People who Smoke Crack Following Implementation of Controversial Safer Inhalation Program*. 20th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, Toronto, Ontario, April 14-17.

Abstract published in: Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases & Medical Microbiology (2011), Vol 22, Suppl B.

Emily Medd¹, Lynne Leonard¹, Andrée Germain¹, Charles Furlotte¹, Kate Smith¹ & Aideen Reynolds¹ (2011). *Use of Makeshift Pipes to Smoke Crack Declines Following the Distribution of Safer Inhalation Supplies in Ottawa*. 20th Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, Toronto, Ontario, April 14-17.

Abstract published in: Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases & Medical Microbiology (2011), Vol 22, Suppl B.

Lynne Leonard¹ (2010). *Ottawa's Safe Inhalation Program: Final Evaluation Report*. University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario.

Lynne Leonard¹, Charles Furlotte¹ & Andrée Germain¹ (2010). *Ottawa Safe Inhalation Program : Process Evaluation Report, Final Phase*. University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario.

Lynne Leonard¹, Andrée Germain¹, Emily Medd¹, Charles Furlotte¹ & Kate Smith¹ (2010). *HIV- and HCV-Related Behaviours and Practices Decline Among People Who Smoke Crack Following Implementation of Controversial Safer Inhalation Program In Ottawa, Canada*. International AIDS Conference, Vienna, Austria, July 18-23.

Lynne Leonard¹, Andrée Germain¹, Emily Medd¹, Charles Furlotte¹ & Kate Smith¹ (2010). *HIV- and HCV-Related Practices Decline Among People Who Smoke Crack Following Implementation of Controversial Safer Inhalation Program*. Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) Research Conference, Toronto, Ontario, November 15-16.

Lynne Leonard¹, Emily Medd¹, Andrée Germain¹, Charles Furlotte¹, Kate Smith¹ & Aideen Reynolds¹ (2010). *Engagement in Sharing Pipes and Using Makeshift Pipes to Smoke Crack Declines Following the Distribution of Safer Inhalation Supplies in Ottawa, Ontario*. Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) Research Conference, Toronto, Ontario, November 15-16.

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