CONSIDERING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO DRUG OVERDOSE IN ETHEKWINI

Michael Wilson, MPH
Advance Access & Delivery
BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS TO RESPOND TO DRUG OVERDOSE

• Pilot study conducted March 2019 across three South African Cities (39 respondents from eThekwini)

• Purpose:
  • Document personal and peer experience of drug overdose
  • Understand comfort in calling for emergency help to response to an overdose
  • Knowledge around opioid overdose management among people who use drugs who access harm reduction services
  • Map hotspots of drug overdoses occurrence
Results:

- 76% used drugs for more than 5 years; most commonly used drug reported was heroin.
- 63% of participants reported having experienced a drug overdose in the past year.
- 76% knew at least one person who had experienced an overdose.
- Most participants (64%) had not heard of naloxone.
- 73% felt comfortable to carry Naloxone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Durban (n=29)</th>
<th>Cape Town (n=21)</th>
<th>Pretoria (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion that personally experienced overdose in last year</td>
<td>12 (41%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>10 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average times they reported personally overdosing in last year</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported knowing someone who had overdosed in last year</td>
<td>23 (79%)</td>
<td>15 (71%)</td>
<td>12 (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Takeaways

- Drug overdoses (lethal and non-lethal) are occurring and individuals are willing to report and there is sharing of overdose experience amongst at risk groups in eThekwini

- There is a need to raise awareness of overdose and who to call for help

- Better surveillance is needed to monitor and track occurrence and locations of drug overdose

- Additional efforts are needed to increase understanding and access to Naloxone
LAW ENFORCEMENT AS PROTECTORS OF HARM REDUCTION SERVICES

- Engagement with LEAD National Support Bureau around role of police in responding to needs of people who use drugs

- During COVID lockdown, law enforcement trained on recognizing and responding to a drug overdose, including administration of Naloxone

- Metro Police stored Naloxone on sites where short-term medical withdrawal program was run from

- Law enforcement protected and championed medical withdrawal program using methadone
The Council of the eThekwini Municipality has set-aside a City owned building, Bellhaven Memorial Hall, to Safer Cities for the purposes of running a harm reduction centre.

Bellhaven Programmes:
- OST Programme (active) 125-130 people daily
- Needle Syringe Programme (active)
- Overdose Prevention Space (in discussion)
- Psychosocial Intervention (active)
- Testing and referral for treatment for TB, HIV, and Hepatitis (active)
- Primary Care Clinic in coordination with DOH (in discussion)

In commemoration of International Overdose Day (August 31):
- Overdose Training
- Naloxone Awareness
- Candlelight Vigil to remember lives lost