

INMATES' PERSPECTIVES ON CANADA'S FIRST PRISON OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITE.

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Background

With the goal of preventing overdose deaths, Correctional Service Canada implemented Canada's first and, to date, only Overdose Prevention Service (OPS) at Alberta's Drumheller Institution June 24th 2019; first inmate accessed the service 10th July. Additional embedded goals of the intervention include facilitating entry into psychosocial and drug-treatment services, reduction in needle sharing and in HIV and HCV transmission.

This paper reports on the acceptability of the intervention from the perspectives of the Institution's inmates.

Methods

Following informed consent, confidential anonymous qualitative interviews held with: inmates currently accessing the OPS; inmates awaiting approval of request; Inmate Committee; and inmates wanting to express an opinion on the service.

Results

OPS used 798 times by 30 individuals July 10th 2019 - 28th February 2020 (latest date data available prior to COVID-19 lockdown.) Significant outcomes include (i) Reduction in needle-sharing: OPS participants compared benefits of sterile equipment availability with previous experiences of attempting to obtain needles: *"I no longer have to trust that someone else's needle is clean"; "A clean needle. I don't use a dirty rig no more – a jail rig."; "It's a safe place to inject, it's supervised."* (ii) Inmates shared their perception that OPS a catalyst in removing stigma around drug use and had opened up discussions around responding to addiction issues: *"OPS has made people aware of addiction, its normalising and we're talking about addiction"; "Now OK to admit that I have an addiction, not a secret anymore"; "It's bringing the problem of addiction to the surface"; "Addiction was previously looked negatively upon..... The problem of addiction can now be responded to".*

Conclusion

Demonstrated HIV- and HCV-related harm reduction health benefits and movement towards addressing and responding to addiction as a health issue in a safe clinical environment augur well for the ongoing Pan-Canadian scale-up of this intervention.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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