



The impact of a drug user-run outreach-based syringe exchange program

What is the study about?

In 2000, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) initiated a drug user-run outreach-based syringe exchange program (SEP) called the Alley Patrol in response to a growing HIV epidemic among people who inject drugs in Vancouver.

Approximately 20 Alley Patrol volunteers have provided services to people who inject drugs on streets and in alleyways. The services included: handing out clean syringes, other injection equipment, and condoms; collecting used syringes; and providing harm reduction education.

This study was conducted to evaluate the impact and reach of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP.

The study asked:

Did the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP reach people who inject drugs who are at risk for HIV infection and reduce HIV risks among them?

How was the study conducted?

Over a period of 3 years following the launch of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP, we interviewed 854 people who inject drugs in Vancouver. We asked them about drug use patterns and whether they accessed the Alley Patrol SEP.

Implications for policy: Why is the study important?

Delivery of education

The VANDU Alley Patrol SEP was effective in delivering sterile syringes and harm reduction education to people who inject drugs that are at high risk for HIV infection.

What did the study find?

Between 2000 and 2003, 27.3% of the study participants reported use of the VANDU Alley Patrol SEP. These individuals tended to live in unstable housing, inject heroin or cocaine every day, and inject drugs in public; and were less likely to reuse their syringes.

The study found:

The VANDU Alley Patrol SEP reached a group of people who inject drugs who were at high risk for HIV infection and reduced needle reuse among these individuals.



VANDU Alley Patrol volunteers.

Extending the reach of HIV prevention programs

This form of peer-based SEP helps extend the reach of HIV prevention programs by contacting people who inject drugs traditionally underserved by conventional services.

For the full report, please visit our website at: <http://uhri.cfenet.ubc.ca>.

Hayashi K, Wood E, Wiebe L, Qi J, Kerr T. **An external evaluation of a peer-run outreach-based syringe exchange in Vancouver, Canada.** *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 2010; 21(5): 418-421.