

HARM REDUCTION

SPRING NEWS 2022

HARM REDUCTION

"Equality is giving everyone a shoe. Equity is giving everyone a shoe that fits"- Naheed Dosani



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SPRING 2022

DRUG *checking*

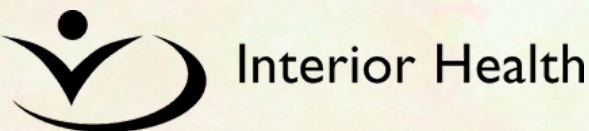
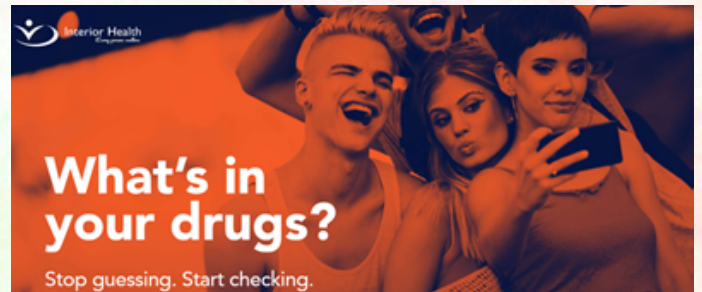
The supply of unregulated drugs is constantly changing and unpredictable. Everyone that uses illicit drugs faces risks that range from discomfort, to severe health complications and death. There is no reliable way to know what is in the substance without using drug checking services.

Drug checking helps people who use drugs to make a conscious and informed choice on “if and how” to use the substances they have on hand. With this service, we are potentially preventing non-fatal and fatal drug poisonings (overdoses) while empowering people to have control over their personal choices. Drug checking also offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect around drug use while creating an open and safe space for exchanging fact based non-judgmental information about drugs. This is a significant step towards transcending stigma and building trusting relationships with marginalized populations. Drug checking technologies are unfortunately not currently available everywhere. To better support equitable access across the Interior, a new service model, Distributed Drug Checking (DDC), aims to expand services across the region without the need to implement lab equipment and dedicated staff at each site.

As of today, we have 21 sites designated and operating across the IH region. If you work at a site that serves people who use drugs, we would like to encourage you to think about offering the service of drug checking via the distributed drug checking model. Registration is quick and easy, requiring a minimal amount of orientation and supplies, all provided by the Drug Checking harm Reduction program. Reach out via email to harmreduction.coordinator@interiorhealth.ca for more information.

On top of the new Distributed Drug Checking program, there are now more than 60 active sites throughout the Interior region providing a range of drug checking options. These vary from Take Home Drug Checking with fentanyl strips offered through IH, Indigenous, and Community Based Organizations to full time technicians operating five FTIR spectrometers across communities including Kamloops, Merritt, Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton, Cranbrook, Nelson and Trail. Drug checking is fast, anonymous and free. Depending on availability and preference, drugs can be checked on-site or using take-home kits.

Visit drugchecking.ca for information.



MEET ANTOINE: COORDINATOR, DRUG CHECKING OPERATIONS AND TRAINING



Antoine Marcheterre is our Coordinator for Drug Checking Training and Operations with the Harm Reduction Program. Antoine started in his position on January 24, 2022.

Antoine comes to the team with a diverse background, including a Bachelor of Science in Architecture, and a Diploma in Psychology. He has been a part of drug checking work for the last ten years and sees how compassion and understanding through a science-based approach can help bring positive change in our society.

Antoine's combined interest in innovation, new drug checking technologies, human rights and harm reduction make him a valuable addition to the Harm Reduction Team.

BC CORONERS SERVICE DEATH REVIEW PANEL

A REVIEW OF ILLICIT DRUG TOXICITY DEATHS

The Death Review Panel is comprised of coroners, and other professionals with expertise in public health, health services, substance use and addiction, medicine, mental health, First Nations Health, education, income assistance, oversight and regulation, and policing.

The Review notes that Since March 2020, corresponding with the start of COVID-19 related restrictions, there is a marked increase in the number of illicit drug toxicity deaths in BC. There are many factors contributing to the increase including the COVID related restrictions and isolation, and the decrease in face to face services, but the primary driver is the growing toxicity and unpredictability of the street supply of drugs. Extreme concentrations and combinations of substances have been detected making the illicit drug supply more dangerous.

In BC, deaths due to toxic drug poisonings have become the 2nd leading cause of deaths in terms of potential years of life lost after cancers, and fifth in terms of the percentage of all deaths in BC. From March 2020 to October 2021, the median age of someone dying as a result of illicit drug toxicity in BC was 44. This means half of the people who died were younger than 44 and half were older.

In comparison, the median age of death for each of the remaining top 15 causes of death is 75 or older with the exception of liver disease with a median age of 62. Deaths due to illicit drug toxicity are the leading cause of death among 19-39 year olds, and deaths due to drug toxicity have created a decline in life expectancy in British Columbia.

First Nations people died at 4.8 times the rate of other BC Residents in 2021.

A REVIEW OF ILLICIT DRUG TOXICITY DEATHS CONTINUED

Health inequities experienced by Indigenous people reflect continuing structural and systemic disadvantages created from colonization, racism, trauma and inequities, and although First Nations and Metis People in BC comprise 3.3% of BC's population, 14% of drug poisoning deaths were among first Nations and Metis Peoples.

This review found that 35% of those who died were employed at the time of their death, and over half of those employed worked in the trades, transport or as equipment operators. This review also found a high correlation between illicit drug toxicity deaths and persons living in poverty or experiencing housing instability with 44% receiving social assistance within a month of their death, 19% living in social housing, hotels/motels, rooming houses or shelters. 12% were homeless

5/10/2022 BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel: A Review of Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths, 2022
BC Coroners Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC, 2022



FESTIVAL SEASON

Getting ready for festival season as it is back on in full force. Interior health contracted agencies will be offering drug checking with FTIR to several festivals this summer Basscoast, Shambhala, Wicked Woods and more



YOUTH HARM REDUCTION

Youth Voices: “You need that one person who won’t give up on you. Youth need one person that actually cares. Who tells you that you deserve better.”

We are excited to announce that our team is expanding to support Interior Health staff, community partners, and schools to incorporate harm reduction services and principles into their work. Lesley Coates has accepted a new position on our team as a Harm Reduction Coordinator for Youth Services. Lesley will be joined soon by two additional Youth Harm Reduction Coordinators. The team will be focused on developing resources, providing training, and increasing harm reduction access points for youth across the region.



ANNIVERSARY

On April 14th (6th anniversary of the BC toxic drug crisis), Peers together with members of Moms Stop the Harm, IH, UBCO and numerous community partners held awareness campaigns, marches, education and other initiatives in communities across the IH region. In Kelowna, Peers, IH staff and MSTH members set up at 11 starbucks locations to give out black balloons, free coffee and have conversations about the toxic drug supply, ending stigma and showing compassion and love for PWUD.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

A HUGE THANK-YOU to all of you who participated in the recent Harm Reduction Environmental Scan Survey. If you didn't get a chance to complete it but would still like to participate please contact Jennifer.Driscoll@interiorhealth.ca or Danielle.Kreutzer@interiorhealth.ca to get a link for the survey. The more responses we have the more aware we are of the gaps in service and how to close them.

FEATURED COMMUNITY: EAST KOOTENAY

KUDOS TO THE EAST KOOTENAY WIDE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING (EK PHNS) TEAM AND THE CRANBROOK URGENT PRIMARY CARE CLINIC (UPCC) FOR THEIR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO HARM REDUCTION SERVICES AND SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION. BOTH HAVE JUST RECENTLY REGISTERED AS TAKE HOME DRUG CHECKING SITES INCREASING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THIS SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE REGION. THANK-YOU!!!



FINDING HARM REDUCTION INFO ON INTERIOR HEALTH'S NEW WEBSITE

Change can be hard even when that change is good. Interior Health has a swanky new website that looks great and is easier to navigate. But if you were used to finding harm reduction info on the old website, you may be feeling a little lost with the new one. Here are a few tips to help you find what you are looking for.

HARM REDUCTION INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Harm Reduction Information for Community Partners
 This is where you can find all the info that our external partner agencies need about naloxone, harm reduction supplies, overdose prevention and drug checking guides, peer engagement tools, courses like Harm Reduction 101 and the fentanyl test strip online course and more.

How to get there from the home page? Click the "Information For" button at the top and select community partners and look for the harm reduction button.

HARM REDUCTION

This page is where you will find high level information for the general public on harm reduction as it applies to substance use - what is harm reduction and why is it important; a brief description of the key harm reduction services and all the sharps information is here too. To get here from the home page click the Health Wellness button then pick Substance Use and Addiction, and find the Harm Reduction button.

DRUG AND OVERDOSE ALERTS

The most current drug and overdose alerts are here. To see all the alerts in the region click on the little bell on the home screen then choose from COVID-19, Environmental or Toxic Drugs.



OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

This page is for the general public. There is information here on how to identify and respond to an overdose, overdose response services, overdose and substance use related news and surveillance (Coroners reports and BCCDC dashboards). To get here from the home page click the Health & Wellness button then pick Substance Use and Addiction and click on the Overdose button.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Here you can find information on STIs, HIV, HCV, gender identity and sexual health resources, Aboriginal sexual health resources and more. To get here from the home page click the Health and Wellness button then pick Sexual Health.

