

First-of-its-kind study shows supervised injection facilities can help people quit drugs

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A study led by researchers at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) at St. Paul's Hospital and the University of British Columbia has found that supervised injection facilities such as Vancouver's Insite connect clients with addiction treatment, which in turn resulted in greater likelihood of stopping injection drug use for at least six months.

The study, recently published in the peer-reviewed journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, is the first ever to examine the link between a supervised injection facility and injection cessation.

"Extensive research has already shown that supervised injection facilities lead to increased uptake into addiction treatment, but no one has ever examined whether this translates into stopping injection drug use," says Kora DeBeck, a PhD candidate at UBC and researcher at the BC-CfE. "This study found that after Insite staff help people who use drugs enter addiction treatment, they are more likely to stop injecting."

The study followed 902 Insite clients who visited the supervised injection facility between December 2003 and June 2006. During this time, 95 of these individuals reported quitting injection [drug use](#) for at least six months. Approximately 78% of participants (or 74 participants) that reported injection cessation were recently engaged in addiction treatment.

The study also showed that Insite clients who went into addiction treatment were more likely to have regularly visited Insite and had

contact with on-site addictions counselors. This group was subsequently more likely to stop injecting.

"Many people benefit from supervised injection facilities, which have been shown to increase addiction treatment, reduce rates of crime and incidence of HIV, prevent drug overdoses, and now help people who use drugs quit injecting," said Dr. Julio Montaner, Director of the BC-CfE and Chair in AIDS Research at UBC's Faculty of Medicine. "These new study results are yet another reason the Canadian federal government should stop their current efforts to shut down Insite."

The study found Aboriginal participants were less likely to enter addiction treatment. This finding is consistent with past studies, which indicated that Aboriginal people who use drugs may be less likely to enter conventional forms of [addiction treatment](#). These findings highlight the importance of engaging with Aboriginal people who use drugs to determine why this group is not benefiting from addiction treatments to the same extent as non-Aboriginal clients and develop strategies to engage this population into treatment.

"Aboriginal people who use drugs need to be involved in the planning and delivery of addiction services. We have been excluded for too long," says Lorna Bird, President of the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society and study co-author.

Study authors note that addiction is recognized as a chronic relapsing condition, and the definition of "injection cessation" was restricted to a period of six months.

More information: The abstract for this study can be found here: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20800976

Provided by University of British Columbia

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