

# Homelessness linked to poor antipsychotic medication adherence

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SFU health sciences researcher Stefanie Rezanoff has found Vancouver's homeless population demonstrates poor adherence to antipsychotic medications. Credit: SFU

SFU health sciences researcher Stefanie Rezanoff has published a new study on the treatment of serious mental illnesses among people who are homeless. This is the first study to investigate adherence to antipsychotic medication in this population.

She found only 12 per cent of the 290 individuals studied were adherent to their medications at the level needed to be effective. This is despite having full [drug coverage](#) and high access to pharmacies.

"Treatment protocols recommend that patients receive these medications continuously once they're initiated, but this can be difficult to ensure when people are precariously housed," says Rezanoff. "There's a strong link between low adherence and long-term homelessness."

Serious [mental illnesses](#) such as schizophrenia are overrepresented among homeless people. When symptoms are not effectively managed, individuals are at a higher risk of hospitalization, arrest, victimization and even suicide.

The research team is currently investigating interventions to improve adherence to [antipsychotic medications](#). Possible interventions include supported housing, prescribing long-acting injections, and initiating regular and frequent contact between patients and primary healthcare providers.

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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