

Connecting vulnerable people with opioid use disorder to care: expanding accessibility and building trust through a community-based telemedicine partnership

Category: Oral Presentation

Abstract Body

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted health service delivery, with unprecedented expansion of telemedicine. However, a significant proportion of people with opioid use disorder (PWOUD) lack access to the technological resources necessary for virtual care. Moreover, they often have complex needs, while being disengaged from mainstream health care services.

In order to provide health services and expand virtual care to PWOUD, the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal Addiction Medicine service (CHUM-A) joined forces with CACTUS Montréal, a community-based harm reduction organisation. Together, we co-constructed a unique telemedicine program aiming to provide evidence-based treatment for PWOUD.

Treatments offered by the CHUM-A team include opioid agonist therapy (OAT), often combined with short-acting opioids to increase comfort during OAT adjustment and reduce the risk of overdoses, as well as other services as needed, including HIV and HCV prevention and treatment, mental health assessment, etc. CACTUS Montréal workers, known and trusted by their clientele, facilitate telemedicine connection within their facilities and maintain follow up and support to the participants.

Our telemedicine program provides a flexible approach for PWOUD otherwise disengaged from traditional care, with alternative treatment options integrated within a local organisation. It represents an affordable solution to reduce the gap between patients and health providers, and is promising to increase access to care in remote areas.

Key Words

- Caring in Crisis
- Opiate Agonist Therapy
- Safe Supply
- Treatment Models/Programs

- Virtual Care

Learning Objective # 1

How to develop and implement a partnership between health care providers and a community organisation to offer virtual health care

Learning Objective # 2

The numerous benefits of such partnership

Reference # 1

Delisle-Reda S, Bruneau J, Martel-Laferrrière V. Telehealth for people who inject drugs: An acceptable method of treatment but challenging to access. *J Addict Dis.* 2022 Feb 8:1-4. doi: 10.1080/10550887.2022.2035166. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 35133229.

Reference # 2

Socías ME, Wood E, Kerr T, Nolan S, Hayashi K, Nosova E, et al. Trends in engagement in the cascade of care for opioid use disorder, Vancouver, Canada, 2006–2016. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2018;189:90-5. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2018.04.026.

Co-Author

Mrs. Amélie Goyette
Street worker | Cactus Montreal

Co-Author

Mrs. Sara-Kim Lamont
Nurse | CHUM

Lead Author

Dr. Catherine de Montigny
MD | CHUM

Co-Author

Mr. Sofiane Chougar
Head Nurse | Centre hospitalier de l'université de Montréal

Co-Author

Dr. Stine Hoj
Research Associate | Centre de Recherche du CHUM

Co-Author

Dr. Julie Bruneau
Clinical scientist | Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal