

Substance Use Among International Students from Punjab

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

Abstract Body

Background: From community and anecdotal evidence, it appears that a growing number of international students in the Lower Mainland who originate from Punjab are using both regulated and unregulated substances, with some risk of developing substance use disorder. International students are a vulnerable population for whom culturally relevant, evidence informed support is lacking. In addition, there is a scarcity of literature on how young international students are introduced to substances on the Canadian soil, and so interventions are not well designed. Finally, social distancing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have interrupted informal support systems that many students rely upon to care for their mental and physical health.

Research Question: What are the substance use patterns, initiators, and sequelae among international students from Punjab who live, work and study in BC's Lower Mainland?

Methods: The study is a prospective, observational, mixed methods design that utilizes survey and interview as data collection tools to explore the proposed research question. The survey portion will aim to capture data on use initiators, patterns, attitudes, beliefs, and severity among a broader international student population. In addition, focused qualitative interviews will be able to capture in depth data about the lived experience of those who use toxic opioids, as well as have space to explore how that lived experience interfaces with the services available for support.

Results: Results are currently pending. The survey has been closed and data is being analyzed. The interviews continue to be conducted, yet data analysis is projected to be complete by August 2023 so that we may present findings at the CSAM conference.

Conclusion: This preliminary research begins setting a foundation for further research and policy around supporting vulnerable international students with their mental health and substance use.

Key Words

- Adolescent/Young Adult Populations
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion issues
- International Perspectives
- Substance Use Disorder (general)
- Urban

Learning Objective # 1

Describe the barriers and challenges that international students from Punjab face once they arrive in Canada.

Learning Objective # 2

Explore substance using trends in the Punjabi international student population, and surmise potential associations leading to those trends

Reference # 1

https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/Health-Professionals/MHO-updates/2020_0618_FHA_CMHOREport.pdf

Reference # 2

https://onevoicecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/The-Realities-of-International-Students-Evidenced-Challenges_Full-Report-2.pdf

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