

# Harm Reduction in Long-Term Care: A New Model of Care for PWUD

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

## Abstract Body

As the public health emergency due to the toxic drug crisis enters its eighth year, BC continues to see high rates of mortality and morbidity among people who use drugs (PWUD). Of particular concern is the lack of evidence-based programs and services for older adult PWUD, especially as this cohort enters assisted living and long-term care (LTC). Access to this level of care is often fraught with barriers for people with complex substance use and mental health issues as LTC services and staffing traditionally support a different population, primarily frail seniors. In 2019, with funding from the BC Ministry of Health, Island Health initiated a LTC-Specialized Population Unit to address the needs of this underserved population within a framework of harm reduction, trauma-informed care, cultural humility and person-centred care. Here, we report on a quality improvement project protocol to implement a LTC-based unit providing services typically only available in community-based programs and services. Believed to be among the first in Canada, this includes prescribed safe supply, individualized managed alcohol, harm reduction, access to on-site Addiction and Psychiatry specialty care, and peer support through Mental Health and Substance Use outreach teams. The unit's care staff also receive mental health and substance use education. We also describe process evaluation and program monitoring plans, which will assess utilization patterns of the unit, acceptability to residents and staff, and health and social outcomes. This initiative will address substantial knowledge gaps in the literature on older adult PWUD, harm reduction in LTC and alternative models of care in LTC. It also builds on recent Canadian efforts to incorporate and study harm reduction services in acute care settings (e.g., Dogherly et al., 2022).

## Key Words

- Elderly Populations
- Prevention/Harm Reduction
- Quality Improvement
- Safe Supply
- Substance Use Disorder (general)
- Treatment Models/Programs

## Learning Objective # 1

Identify and reflect on the challenges and barriers faced by people who use drugs in long-term care.

## Learning Objective # 2

Describe the rationale, setting, staffing model and implementation of a harm reduction approach in long-term care

### Reference # 1

1. BC Ministry of Health and BC Centre on Substance Use (2017, August). Supervised consumption services: Operational guidance. <https://www.bccsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BC-SCS-Operational-Guidance.pdf>

### Reference # 2

2. Dogherty, E., Patterson, C., Gagnon, M., Harrison, S., Chase, J., Boerstler, J., Gibson, J., Gill, S., Nolan, S., & Ryan, A. (2022). Implementation of a nurse-led overdose prevention site in a hospital setting: Lessons learned from St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-022-00596-7>

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