

Alberta's Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP), providing rapid Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) access to ongoing care

Category: Oral Presentation

Abstract Body

Alberta's Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP) was created in 2017 and arose from an identified gap in access and care for rural Albertans with opioid dependency. Up until 2017, only Albertans living in large urban centers had access to opioid agonist therapy (OAT) to treat their opioid dependency. Overdoses arising from opioid use has been an ongoing epidemic across Canada, particularly in western Canada, in 2022, Alberta saw over 1600 opioid related deaths. VODP's novel approach to OAT access and care, has continued to expand since its inception, providing all Albertans with access to OAT and care in a completely virtual environment.

VODP serves Albertans who experience access barriers to traditional face to face opioid dependency programs. VODP provides rapid initiation, stabilization, transitional, low barrier, and ongoing OAT care for Albertans suffering with opioid dependency, including individuals in police custody, in shelters, at safe consumption sites and youths under 18 years of age. VODP is a multidisciplinary program and seeks to provide holistic care for clients as driven by individual client goals and focusing on building recovery capital. VODP is a non-judgmental, non-punishment-based program that understands recovery is not a linear process. VODP provides rapid access to life-saving OAT for individuals with opioid dependency.

Key Words

- Caring in Crisis
- Opiate Agonist Therapy
- Pharmacologic Interventions
- Prevention/Harm Reduction
- Virtual Care

Learning Objective # 1

Understand rapid access to OAT and ongoing care for patients with opioid dependency and how they move their way through VODP and its associated program offerings.

Learning Objective # 2

Understand OAT access and care that is delivered in an entirely virtual environment, and how VODP operates differently than in-person ODPs.

Reference # 1

Day N, Wass M, Smith K. Virtual opioid agonist treatment: Alberta's virtual opioid dependency program and outcomes. *Addict Sci Clin Pract*. 2022 Jul 28;17(1):40. doi: 10.1186/s13722-022-00323-4. PMID: 35902924; PMCID: PMC9330968.

Reference # 2

Yang YT, Weintraub E, Haffajee RL. Telemedicine's Role in Addressing the Opioid Epidemic. *Mayo Clin Proc*. 2018 Sep;93(9):1177-1180. doi: 10.1016/j.mayocp.2018.07.001. Epub 2018 Aug 7. PMID: 30097301; PMCID: PMC6330237.

Co-Author

Ms. Lindsey Davis
Addictions Counselor III | Alberta Health Services

Co-Author

Ms. Jenifer Nasr
Addictions Counselor III | Alberta Health Services