

# Attitudes Towards Safe Injection Facilities Among People Who Inject Drugs Presenting for Treatment of Upper Extremity Infections

Allison K Baergen, MD<sup>1</sup>; Jessica M Winter, MD<sup>2</sup>; Holly Black, MD<sup>2</sup>; Kaley Donaldson, MD<sup>2</sup>; Tom Jelic, MD FRCPC<sup>2</sup>; Leif Sigurdson, MD FRCSC<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada; <sup>2</sup> University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

### INTRODUCTION

- Use of injectable drugs is increasing in North America<sup>1,2</sup>
- Winnipeg, a Canadian city saw a 1700% increase in amphetamine-related emergency department visits between 2013-2017<sup>2</sup>
- People who inject drugs (PWID) presenting to emergency departments for treatment of upper extremity infections account for approximately 20% of all upper extremity infections<sup>1</sup>
- PWID accounted for 80% of admissions among upper extremity infections presenting to emergency departments<sup>1,3</sup>
- In 2003, North America's first supervised injection facility was opened in Vancouver, Canada<sup>4</sup>
- Despite evidence that safe injection facilities (SIF) allow for safer injection conditions and improved health education regarding aseptic injection techniques, SIF have yet to be embraced by most Canadian cities<sup>4-6</sup>

### AIM

SIF have received positive reviews by participants who have complemented site cleanliness, safety and staff acceptance; however, the perspectives of patients presenting with upper extremity infections associated with IVDU have not been specifically explored in the literature

Two major aims:

- Explore interest and willingness among PWID to access a SIF, if one was available in a major Canadian city
- Assess opinions of Emergency Room Physicians regarding the ability of SIF to reduce number of hospital visits and cost associated with IVDU-induced upper extremity infections

### METHODS

Successfully reviewed by the University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board

↓

#### Part 1: Survey for Patients

- Inclusion criteria: patients > 18 years if age, presenting to Canadian ED between August 2020-2021 with upper extremity infection caused by IVDU
- Exclusion criteria: < 18 years of age, intoxicated, medically unstable
- Survey question: Would you have interest in accessing a safe injection facility? If no, why not?

↓

#### Part 2: Survey for Emergency Room Physicians

- Survey was sent via Survey Monkey to 74 Emergency Room Physicians In Canadian hospital
- (1) Do you believe that safe injection facilities can reduce the prevalence of injection drug associated hand infections?
- (2) Do you believe that safe injection facilities can reduce costs to the healthcare system?

### RESULTS

#### Part 1: Survey for Patients

- 15 eligible PWID were surveyed (Figure 1)

#### Part 2: Survey for Emergency Room Physicians

- 25 of 74 surveyed Emergency Room Physicians responded (Figure 2)

### CONCLUSION

- There is interest in SIF among PWID presenting to a Canadian emergency department with an upper extremity infection
- Emergency room physicians share support of SIF and belief in the utility of such harm reduction strategies
- We hope these responses will support advocacy work in implanting SIF across Canada

### REFERENCES

- Ovalle F, Dembinski D, Yalamanchili S, Minkara A, Stern PJ. Hand and Upper Extremity Infections in Intravenous Drug Users: Epidemiology and Predictors of Outcomes. *J Hand Surg Am.* 2020;45(6):503-511. doi:10.1016/j.jhsa.2020.02.004
- Marshall S, Reimer J. Crystal methamphetamine use in Winnipeg: Drug consumption and context. *Winnipeg Reg Heal Auth.* 2018.
- Charalambous CP, Zipitis CS, Kumar R, Lipsett PA, Hirst P, Paul A. Soft tissue infections of the extremities in an orthopaedic centre in the UK. *J Infect.* 2003;46(2):106-110. doi:10.1053/jinf.2002.1099
- Potier C, Lapr votte V, Rolland B. Supervised injection services: What has been demonstrated? A systematic literature review. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2014;145:48-68. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2014.10.012
- Kerr T, Wood E, Grafstein E, et al. High rates of primary care and emergency department use among injection drug users in Vancouver. *J Public Health (Bangkok).* 2005;27(1):62-66. doi:10.1093/pubmed/fdh189
- Small W, Ainsworth L, Wood E, et al. IDU Perspectives on the Design and Operation of North America's First Medically Supervised Injection Facility. *Subst Use Misuse.* 2010;46(5):561-568. doi:10.3109/10826084.2010.517714

Would you have interest in accessing a safe injection facility?

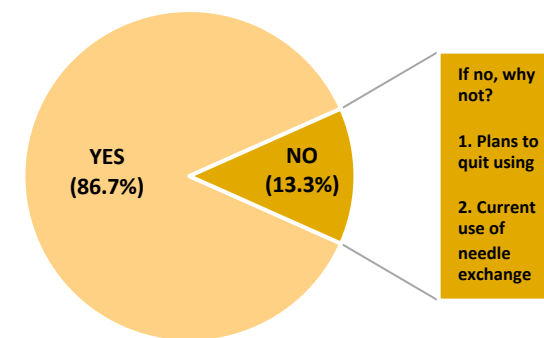


Figure 1. Survey Questions for Patients

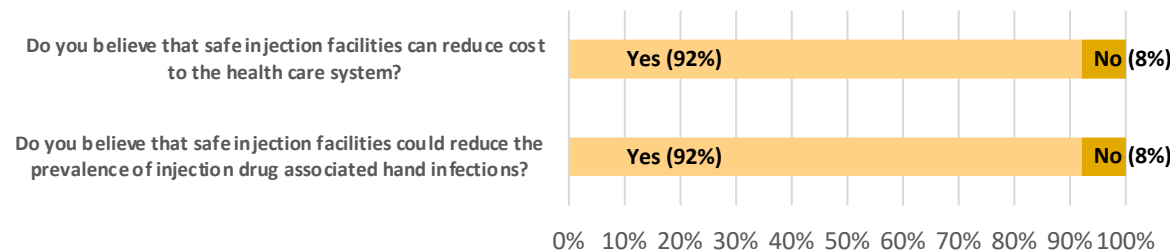


Figure 2. Survey Questions for Emergency Room Physicians

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the physicians and patients who consented to participate in our survey.