OVERDOSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE UPDATE  

April 25, 2017

Providence Health Care continues to respond to the overdose crisis currently impacting our city and province. And our staff continue to go above and beyond in their extraordinary efforts to pitch in wherever needed and provide exceptional care. We recognize and acknowledge that some sites, teams and programs are especially affected, including St. Paul’s Hospital and its Emergency Department, the Inner City Youth Team, and the HIV and Substance Use programs.

We know the overdose crisis doesn’t directly involve every staff member but we also know that on an organizational and colleague level, something as significant as what’s happening in our city and province affects all of us at Providence. Below we have gathered updates to inform all staff on the current state of the crisis, and how we’re responding to it on a provincial, organizational and PHC-specific level.

Provincial Overdose Statistics & Updates

- According to the most recent BC Coroner’s data, 120 people died as a result of suspected drug overdoses during the month of March. This is a 51.9% increase over the number of deaths occurring in March 2016 (79).
- This is the third highest number of illicit overdose deaths for a single month, and equates to an average of about four deaths per day.
- Overdose deaths in the Vancouver Coast Health (VCH) region in March were 34, compared to 32 in February. Fraser had 37 deaths, the highest in BC.
- For the first three months of 2017, VCH had the highest rate of illicit drug overdose deaths (39.3 deaths per 100,000 individuals) and the largest increase over the same period from 2016 (81%).
- 89% of illicit drug overdose deaths occurred indoors (the majority in private residences).
- There have been no deaths at a supervised-consumption or drug-overdose prevention site.
- Friday, April 14, marked the one-year anniversary of the declaration of a public health emergency in response to opioid-related overdoses in BC.

Providence and SPH-Specific

- **Increased volume for April:** We are again seeing an increase in overdoses patients coming to the ED at St. Paul’s. This increase is being closely tracked and monitored. Staff and patients should be aware that stimulant users are also at risk.
- **Providence in the news:** Throughout the crisis, PHC clinicians, leaders, researchers and staff have further helped educate the public through media relations activities and education. On Saturday, April 22, W5 dedicated a one-hour episode to Vancouver’s Downtown East Side; a spot referred to as “Ground Zero of the Canada’s opioid crisis” in the episode. Dr. Dan Kalla and Dr. Brian Lahiffe from St. Paul’s Emergency Department were featured, as well as Dr. Scott MacDonald, physician lead at Providence’s Crosstown Clinic.  
  See the W5 recap here
The HUB at St. Paul’s: Foundation and excavation work in the courtyards behind the Burrard Building will commence later this week/early next to ready the space for HUB implementation.

St. Paul’s Hospital Chair in Substance Use Research: Simon Fraser University (SFU), St. Paul’s Foundation, the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU) and the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) have created a new position dedicated to advancing understanding in substance use on a local, national and international level. The inaugural St. Paul’s Hospital Chair in Substance Use Research is Dr. Kanna Hayashi, an SFU professor and an internationally recognized substance-use epidemiologist and human-rights advocate for people who use drugs. Read more about this inaugural position

The following supports and actions are available/happening at St. Paul’s to ensure staff feel heard and supported, and our patients continue to receive high quality, compassionate care.

- On-site expertise: Our RAAC staff are available for consultative advice for physicians and staff managing difficult addiction-related cases. Additionally, an Addictions Assessment Nurse is staffed in the ED from 10am to 6pm to support staff conducting assessments and initiating Suboxone starts. Peer navigators, who are trained in counselling, are also available from 9am to 4:30pm to help engage patients while they wait to start treatment. Contact the RAAC for more information on accessing these supports and services: 604-806-8867.

- Education: Professional Practice and Urban Health have a list of addiction and harm reduction-related educational resources. To get a copy of this list, and/or to arrange an education in-service on your unit, contact Elyse Vani, clinical nurse educator, at 604-314-9088 or EVani@providencehealth.bc.ca.

- Staff support: We know that providing care during a crisis situation is stressful in the moment, and lingers long after. Please see a list of supports that all staff are encouraged to access: [http://phcnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/support_for_staff_during_overdose_crisis_-_dec_19.pdf](http://phcnews.ca/wp-content/uploads/support_for_staff_during_overdose_crisis_-_dec_19.pdf)

Please visit [phcnews.ca/overdose](http://phcnews.ca/overdose) for a complete list of overdose bulletins previously distributed to PHC staff.