

Substance Abuse and Addiction in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

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Background

- Prince Albert is experiencing an addiction epidemic that has socioeconomic and health implications.
- Alcohol and drugs comprise 65% and 42% respectively of the cases presented to the Community mobilization Hub meetings.
- 18.2% of hospital admissions and 9.2% of emergency room visits are due to substance use and addiction challenges
- Policing public intoxication cost \$2.5 million dollars; 1300 hours spent in 2012 making public intoxication arrests
- 61% of HIV infection are attributed to injection drug use



Methods

- A team of four nursing scholars obtained funding from the Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM)
- Invited stakeholders with an interest in substance use and addiction
- Forum goals:
 - Share knowledge on experiences with substance abuse and addiction challenges
 - Collaboratively identify priority focuses for addressing substance abuse and addiction
- The event began with a word of prayer from an Indigenous Elder then presentation on the state of substance use and addiction in Prince Albert
- The researchers assigned participants to one of five groups.
 - The groups began by identifying strengths and opportunities for addiction services in health region
 - The groups then identified a list of priorities for research focus and prioritized them by placing notes beside the items listed

Results

52 individuals participated in the event



Activity 1: Identifying strength and opportunity for growth of addiction services in Prince Albert

| Strengths | Weakness/ Opportunities for Improvement |
|--|--|
| Stakeholder collaboration | Detox service capacity |
| Accessible services | Mobile community/ large geographical area |
| Law enforcement/ Police | Upstream/prevention services |
| Collaboration between healthcare providers | Attrition of healthcare providers |
| Community outreach programs | Stigma and low addiction knowledge among healthcare providers |
| Client-centered approaches used | Lack of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people |
| Housing initiatives | Poverty and other social determinants of health |
| Harm reduction program | Untreated trauma, unresolved grief, and mental health challenges |

Activity 2: Selected Ideas Generated during Envision Activity

| Theme | Select Ideas |
|------------------------------|---|
| Prevention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School based prevention • Health system navigation support |
| Treatment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally appropriate care • Expand capacity of detox |
| Community supports/resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional housing • Childcare supports |
| Harm reduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm reduction services • Withdrawal in appropriate care setting |

Discussion

- Participatory Action Research was an ideal methodology for the identification of community priorities on substance use and addiction to gather diverse perspectives from a variety of community members and stakeholder organizations.
- The event showcased that nurse researchers can be leaders in tackling social issues such as substance abuse and addiction
- Services that were deemed to be critical to addiction care, yet lacking were:
 - Integrated mental health and addiction services
 - Prevention services including community support, transitional housing, accessibility to short-term services detox
- Face to face meetings allowed researchers to incorporate stakeholder's input and expand to new potential stakeholders
- The event created opportunities for networking and exchange of ideas
- Follow-up debriefing to attend to individuals that felt that their voices were not heard during the event

What the event achieved

The community knowledge and exchange event led to the:

- Development of a manuscript submitted for publication
- Development of a SPROUT grant application from Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation focusing on interventions for families of clients living with addiction in Prince Albert
- Expanded networking opportunities with key stakeholders in addiction care and service providers

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