

# PROUD

## OUT LOUD!

Volume 10: September 2015

### Prescription and Illicit Drug Use

**PROUD OUT LOUD** is a newsletter produced to communicate preliminary research findings from the PROUD Study, as well as relevant information for our community members and partner organizations. This current issue covers preliminary data mostly from our sub-study conducted in the summer of 2014. This study interviewed 136 people who had injected drugs in the last 30 days prior to completing the survey.

In the summer of 2014 a study was conducted with a sample of people who had injected drugs in the last 30 days. Of the **136** participants in the sub-study:

The most common drugs participants injected in the last 30 days were:

- **64%** injected Morphine
- **61%** injected Dilaudid (Hydromorphone)
- **51%** injected Cocaine (Benzoylmethylecgonine)
- **43%** injected Heroin (Diacetylmorphine)
- **39%** injected Crack-Cocaine
- **32%** injected Fentanyl
- **24%** injected OxyContin (Oxycodone Hydrochloride)
- **17%** injected Crystal Meth (Methamphetamine Hydrochloride)



The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (S.C. 1996, c.19), CDSA, is a federal law that restricts access to specific drugs and substances. Heroin, cocaine and many amphetamines are criminalized. Unregulated possession and distribution of cocaine and opium was made illegal in Canada in 1911. Before that they were sold as medicines.

Of the **41** participants who had used Fentanyl in the last 30 days:

- **95%** injected fentanyl
- **13%** smoked fentanyl
- **61%** found it easy to obtain fentanyl without having a prescription
- **86%** had used fentanyl when they were alone

Of the 136 participants in the sub-study **107** used prescription drugs:

Out of the **107** participants who use prescription drugs:

- **80%** obtained prescription drugs on the street from a dealer
- **39%** obtained the drugs through a doctor
- **30%** obtained drugs through a friend
- **7%** obtained drugs by prescription from the emergency room of a hospital

On March 1st 2012, pharmaceutical companies discontinued OxyContin and began replacing it with a similar but harder to inject opiate called OxyNEO.

Out of the **858** participants recruited in the **PROUD Cohort** study from March 2013 to January 2014:

- **24%** or 205 participants, had used OxyContin in the past 12 months

Of this **205** participants:

- **36%** found there was no change in the amount of OxyContin they were using
- **28%** decreased their use of OxyContin
- **51%** believed that it has become more difficult to obtain OxyContin
- **51%** (118) replaced OxyContin with a different drug

Of the **118** participants who replaced OxyContin with a different drug, below are the top four replacement drugs:

- **54%** used Morphine
- **51%** used Dilaudid (Hydromorphone)
- **25%** used Fentanyl
- **19%** used Heroin (Diacetylmorphine)

On September 30th 2011 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Insite, Canada's first Supervised Injection facility, had reduced the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, stopped overdose death, had a positive impact on the surrounding community, and was a cost-savings measure. Federal law provides an exemption from the CDSA to medical facilities to allow people to possess illegal substances for the purposes of injecting within the facility.

The **PROUD Cohort** study is a community-based research project that examines HIV risk among people who use drugs in Ottawa. The study was conducted from March 2013 to January 2014. Participants who reported using injection drugs or smoking crack-cocaine in the past 12 months were enrolled through a specific, street-based recruitment strategy. We enrolled a representative sample of participants who completed a comprehensive questionnaire and were offered HIV Point-of-Care testing. The survey and strategy was developed by people who use(d) drugs and their allies.

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