

| Episode 35 |

COVID-19 – Impact on the Homeless, Safe Injection Sites, & More

Host: Dr. Kwadwo Kyeremanteng, MD, MHA

Guest: Dr. Mark Tyndall, MD

(Infectious disease physician specializing in HIV prevention & harm reduction)



ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY: Dr. Mark Tyndall gives an update on current harm reduction initiatives providing support to individuals who use drugs during the pandemic

Key Takeaways

- Safe injection sites are preparing and taking precautions for pandemic spread
 - Starting to see increased overdoses & drug shortages
 - For inmates at jails that have reported positive COVID-19 cases, **discharge plans are important to prevent overdosing if they are to be released**
- Public health should take a holistic perspective beyond counting new COVID-19 cases and mortality
 - We need to start measuring unintended consequences of the pandemic like overdosing and unemployment
 - Adaptability is important to address these unintended consequences
 - le: increasing virtual connections via videochat for seniors experiencing loneliness
- **Addictions are rooted in social problems**, and requires flexible management that address both medical and social concerns
 - Individuals who use drugs experience recurrent trauma and experiences with poverty
 - Need a long-term holistic approach, can't rely on cold-turkey approaches

A Closer Look

Safe supply program

- Safe supply refers to the harm reduction principle of distributing substances as alternatives to street drugs that may be laced with fentanyl
 - Hydromorphone or suboxone are examples of safe supply substances
- Medication dispensing machines
 - Pilot program with 15 participants allows them to access safe supply pills from a machine
 - Participants identified by a vein scanner built into the machine
 - Machine has internal timer to determine if person is eligible to get another batch of medication
 - Most participants receive a daily supply to self-administer
 - **Still requires a doctor's prescription and is documented on pharmacy records**
 - "This is just a lockbox for people's drugs", says Dr. Tyndall
 - Vancouver police embracing the machines as a crime prevention measure
 - Monthly maintenance cost per machine is \$2500
- Next steps
 - 5 more machines have been ordered to expand the program
 - Continue to advocate for harm reduction and garner support from the community

Further Readings

- ❖ Solving Healthcare Podcast Website: <https://solving-healthcare-with-dr-kwadwo-kyeremanteng.simplecast.com/>
- ❖ Solving Healthcare Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/solving-healthcare-with-dr-kwadwo-kyeremanteng/id1478899917>
- ❖ Check us out on iTunes: "Solving Healthcare with Dr. Kwadwo Kyeremanteng"
- ❖ Resource Optimization Network: <https://www.resourceoptimizationnetwork.com/>

Show Notes by Christina Yan