

Canada's first safer opioid supply program reduced adverse events among people at high risk of overdose

Safer opioid supply (SOS) programs:


A harm reduction measure providing prescription opioids plus health and social supports to individuals at high risk of overdose.

2016:

The London Intercommunity Health Centre (LIHC) began the **first SOS program** in Canada.

Objective:

This study assessed the impact of the LIHC SOS program on health service use and healthcare costs.

 **82** of 94 individuals enrolled in the program were linked to healthcare records and matched **303** London residents with opioid use disorder (OUD) not in the program.

 In the year after starting the program, clients had a:

Rapid decrease in:



Emergency department visits,

Hospital admissions



Healthcare costs,
(excluding primary care and medication costs), and

Incident infections



Significant increase in:



Medication costs

(among SOS clients eligible for public drug benefits)

No significant change in:

All-cause mortality, or opioid-related death.

No changes in these outcomes were observed among matched London residents with OUD.

Conclusion

This study provides preliminary evidence that SOS programs can play an important role in the expansion of treatment and harm reduction options for people at high risk of drug poisoning.

For more information:

Gomes T., Kolla G., McCormack D., Sereda A., Kitchen S., and Antoniou T. (2022). Clinical outcomes and healthcare costs among people entering a safer opioid supply program in Ontario: A comparative time series analysis. *CMAJ*.