Increasing Access to Harm Reduction Resources during COVID-19

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So What?

In May 2020, there were 56 emergency department visits for opioid overdoses in Pitt County, a 37% increase from the 41 visits in May 2019. The number of opioid overdoses has the potential to rise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SSPs can reduce overdose deaths by educating PWID on how to prevent and respond to overdoses by educating about and providing the life-saving opioid reversal drug, naloxone. In addition to increased risk of contracting HIV and HCV, PWID are at an increased risk for soft tissue infections, such as abscesses, and serious bacterial infections, such as endocarditis and bacteraemia. Proper education on safe injection techniques and soft tissue infections is lacking and has the potential to help clients avoid serious bacterial infections.

Now What?

This project aims to address the risk of opioid overdoses and the spread of bloodborne infections caused by intravenous drug use. ekiM Syringe Service Program provides services aimed at increasing access to harm reduction supplies for those without transportation to the fixed site. We will also educate clients, both in person and by video, on safer injection techniques and proper self-treatment of skin and soft tissue infections. Additionally, we aim to partner with the Pitt County Health Department to organize periodic onsite influenza and hepatitis A and B vaccination clinics during the already occurring Saturday exchanges.

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References: