



## **STUDY FINDS INCREASE IN BC OVERDOSE HOSPITALIZATIONS**

A new study by the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC) reveals an increase in BC hospitalizations as a result of alcohol and illicit drug overdoses between 2002 and 2009. The rate of alcohol overdose hospitalizations in the population rose by 16 per cent, while other drug overdose hospitalizations rose by 33 per cent. In total there were 3,753 overdose hospitalizations recorded during this period for the province.

There are many more overdose events presenting to emergency rooms than are admitted to hospital. For example, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority recorded 5,331 emergency room visitors who presented as an overdose in 2010 alone.

"Alcohol poses a much higher risk of overdose than people realize," says research collaborator Jane Buxton, an epidemiologist with the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. "There needs to be much more awareness and education around the use of alcohol, both on its own and in combination with other drugs."

The study was published in the latest CARBC Bulletin and is a collaboration between BCCDC, Vancouver Coastal Health's Public Health Surveillance Unit and CARBC. The BC Coroners Service also contributed data for this study.

Of the five geographic areas administered by the BC Coroners Service, Metro Vancouver had the highest rate of drug overdose fatalities, with 7.6 deaths per 100,000 people. The Northern region recorded the lowest overdose death rates with 2.15 per 100,000 people.

The research also shows that Vancouver's supervised safe injection service InSite is helping manage overdoses, providing Naloxone (Narcan), an opiate antagonist administered to people experiencing a heroin overdose.

"There is an urgent need for more investment in harm reduction services and education about risk factors for alcohol and other drug overdose," says Vallance, a research associate with UVic's CARBC and a co-author of the study. "We think this would go a long way to reducing the rate of overdoses in BC."

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