



THE RECONNECT PROJECT

Reducing Barriers Through Atlantic Canada's First Overdose Prevention Site

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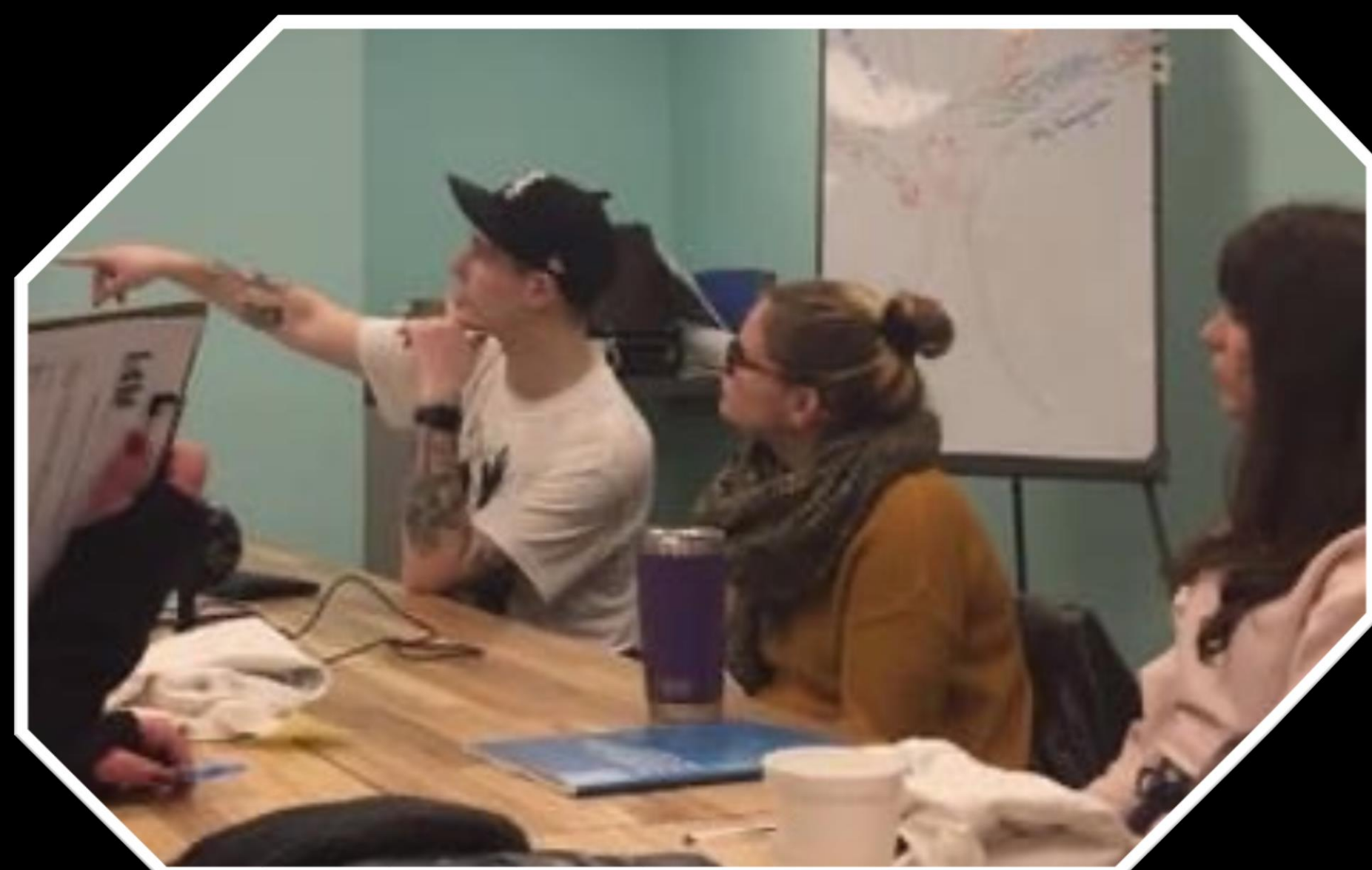
BACKGROUND

The HaliFIX Overdose Prevention Society is an organization dedicated to reducing the harms associated with substance use. Recently, we opened Atlantic Canada's first overdose prevention site's (OPS). Our site employs former or current substance users. The goal of the OPS is not only to provide a safe space for people who use drugs (PWUD) but also to offer services and connection to services needed by PWUD, including hepatitis C virus testing and treatment.



PURPOSE

In Atlantic Canada, point-of-care-testing (POCT) for hepatitis C & HIV has only recently begun to be employed and remains largely limited to testing conducted by healthcare providers. The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate proof-of-concept that with appropriate preparation and supports, drug user led HCV POCT has the potential to significantly expand access to screening, diagnosis and treatment. Through drug user led POCT events we hope to reduce the structural, social and self-directed stigma that comes with injection substance use and/or being infected with HCV while increasing the capacity amongst the drug use experts to feel comfortable performing POCT for HCV & potentially HIV POCT.





PROJECT FORMAT

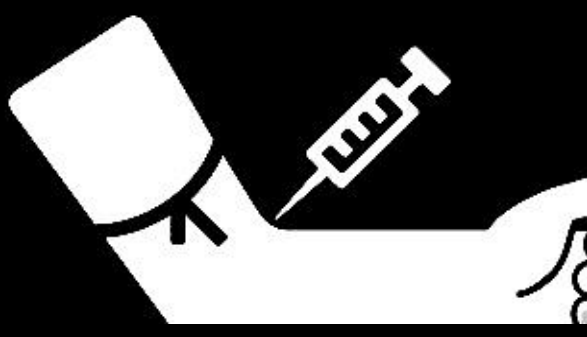
Halifax Area Network of Drug Using People will lead 6 POCT events through the OPS while linking the participants to care through our low integrated model of housing an OPS in a low barrier opioid agonist therapy (OAT) clinic. After each testing event we will hold a focus group focusing on POCT, treatment, honorariums, stigma & future roles for people with lived experience for participants of each session to provide feedback and input.



METHODS

We are using mixed methods to create the concept document. Each participant is asked if they would like to fill out a participant form (not required) and then participate in the focus group (not required).

Will be using quantitative data to describe the general demographics and drug use history of the participants. Then using qualitative data for an analysis of the participants experience being a part of the project.



PRELIMINARY RESULTS

AS OF RIGHT NOW WE ONLY HAVE RESULTS FROM TWO EVENTS...

Along with the results from the previous page we also collected data on their substance use & social challenges such as experiencing homelessness or incarceration.

IN the last 6 months...

52.6% Experienced Homelessness

26.3% Experienced Incarceration

43.1% Injected Substances

2 out of the 19 knew about HCV Elimination.

19 unique participants were asked...

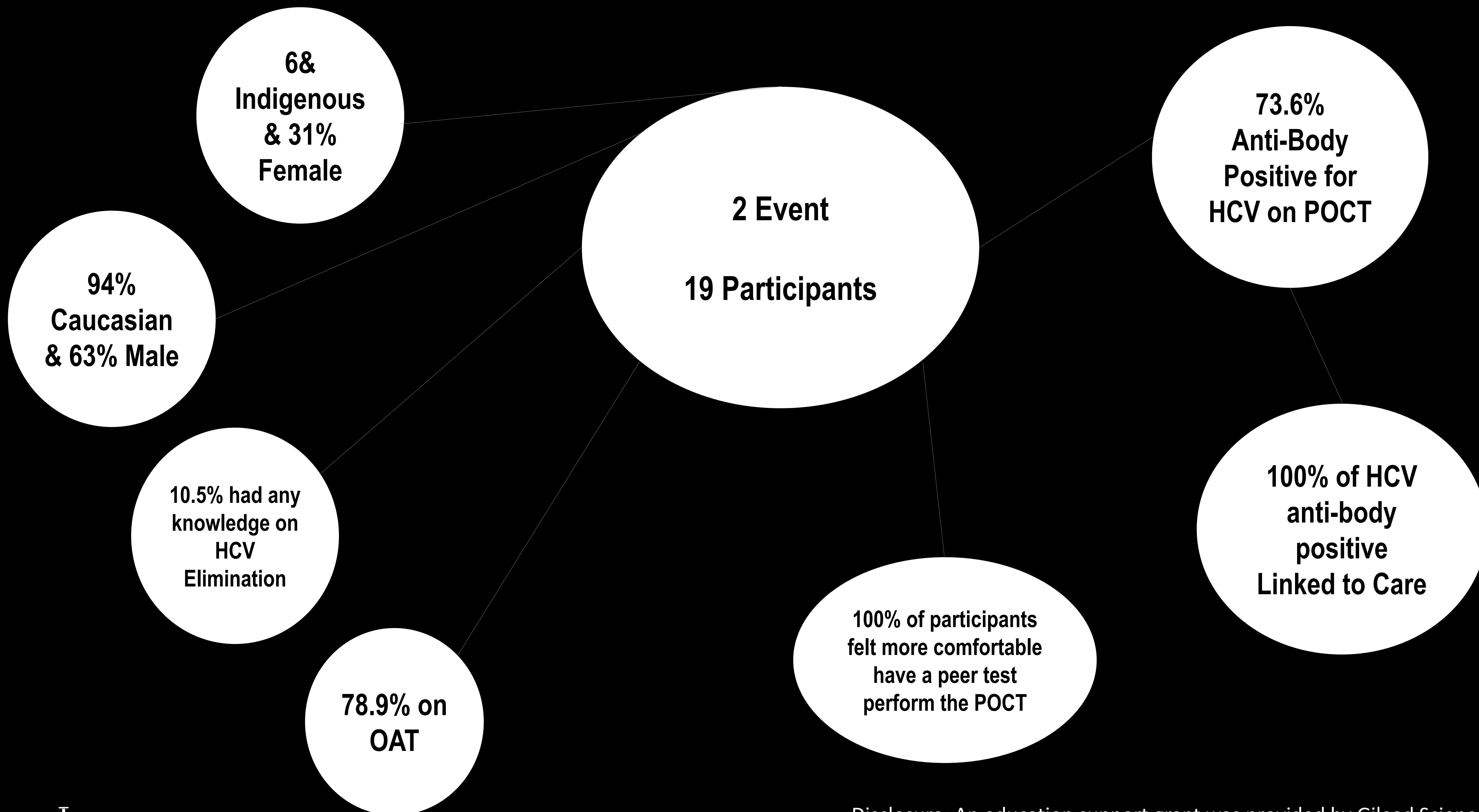
Did you feel more comfortable with PWUD performing the POCT rather than a Healthcare Practitioner performing it?

They ALL agreed that they felt more comfortable with a drug user performing the test.

“Faced stigma a lot due to hepatitis C, mainly from health care professionals. The ones that are supposed to be treating you a lot of the times are doing the most harm.” – Participant



PRELIMINARY RESULTS CONT.



Disclosure: An education support grant was provided by Gilead Sciences Canada Inc. for this project. Design and conduct of the project was solely conducted by the project leads without input from Gilead.

THE RECONNECT PROJECT CONT.

The results of these focus groups will be used to create a concept document defining a clear and concise role for people with lived experience while working towards HCV elimination.

The plan is to show proof of concept for drug users roles in healthcare when responding to multiple public health emergencies that effect drug users such overdoses, HCV, HIV & COVID.

Due to COVID the overdose prevention site is not open. We've had to halt our project. The original finish date would have been in June but as of right now we are unsure when we will be able to recommence the project.

Once we can finish the project. The results will be created into a concept document to share amongst drug user groups.

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