



## IMPROVING CRACK PIPE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM TO REDUCE HEALTH RISKS AND RELATED HARMS

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Recently, there have been changes to the crack pipe distribution program in Vancouver to try to make new pipes more available for crack cocaine smokers.
- Crack pipes are now being given out for free by the health authority in Vancouver.
- Crack pipes can also be bought for very low costs at corner stores.
- We did a study to see if the changes in the distribution program affected crack pipe sharing and access to crack pipes.
- Between December 2010 and May 2011 we interviewed 503 crack cocaine smokers in the Vancouver area.
- We asked them about their crack pipe sharing behaviours and their access to crack pipes.

### QUICK FACT

*INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CRACK PIPE DISTRIBUTION SITES WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR SMOKERS TO GET NEW PIPES AND WILL HELP TO MINIMIZE CRACK PIPE SHARING AND HEALTH HARMS LINKED TO SHARING.*

### FINDINGS

- 47% of the people reported having shared a crack pipe.
- People who shared crack pipes were more likely to have difficulty accessing pipes.
- People who shared crack pipes were also more likely to acquire plastic mouthpieces for the pipes. If a person has their own mouthpiece that no one else uses, this reduces the risk of spreading disease.

### IMPLICATIONS

- Increasing the number of crack pipe distribution sites will make it easier for crack cocaine smokers to get new pipes.
- Easier access to new pipes will help to minimize crack pipe sharing and health harms linked to sharing.

Ti L, Buxton J, Wood E, Zhang R, Montaner J, Kerr T. **Difficulty accessing crack pipes and crack pipe sharing among people who use drugs in Vancouver, Canada.** *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, 2011; 6(1): 34.

