



HOMELESSNESS A KEY FACTOR IN YOUTH EXPERIMENTING WITH INJECTION DRUG USE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Homelessness puts street-involved youth in Vancouver at great risk of initiating injection drug use, according to a new study.
- Between September 2005 and November 2011, the study's researchers interviewed 422 youth enrolled in the At-Risk Youth Study (ARYS), a prospective cohort of Vancouver street-involved youth between 14 and 26 years of age.

QUICK FACT

MORE THAN 32% OF THOSE INTERVIEWED WHO WERE HOMELESS REPORTED EXPERIMENTING WITH INJECTION DRUG USE.

FINDINGS

- The study found that more than 32% of those interviewed who were homeless reported experimenting with injection drug use, making them twice as likely to initiate injection drug use as those who were not homeless.
- Over the study follow-up, researchers observed 77 injection initiation events (18%).
- Homeless participants demonstrated a significantly higher risk of injection initiation. The cumulative incidence of injection initiation among homeless participants reached 32.8% over the study follow-up, compared with 15.8% among those who were not homeless, indicating that homelessness is a key risk factor for injection initiation even after adjusting for other competing factors such as crystal methamphetamine use.

IMPLICATIONS

- Researchers concluded that the findings suggest that supportive housing interventions in combination with other youth-specific programs may help prevent injection initiation within this high-risk population.

Feng C, DeBeck K, Kerr T, Mathias S, Montaner J, Wood E. Homelessness independently predicts injection drug use initiation among street-involved youth in a Canadian setting. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2013; 52(4): 499-501.

