

# Identifying, piloting, and evaluating a real-time drug alert & response (RADAR) system in Vancouver, BC

Sara Young, Rebecca Thomas, Jane Buxton, Heidi Griffey

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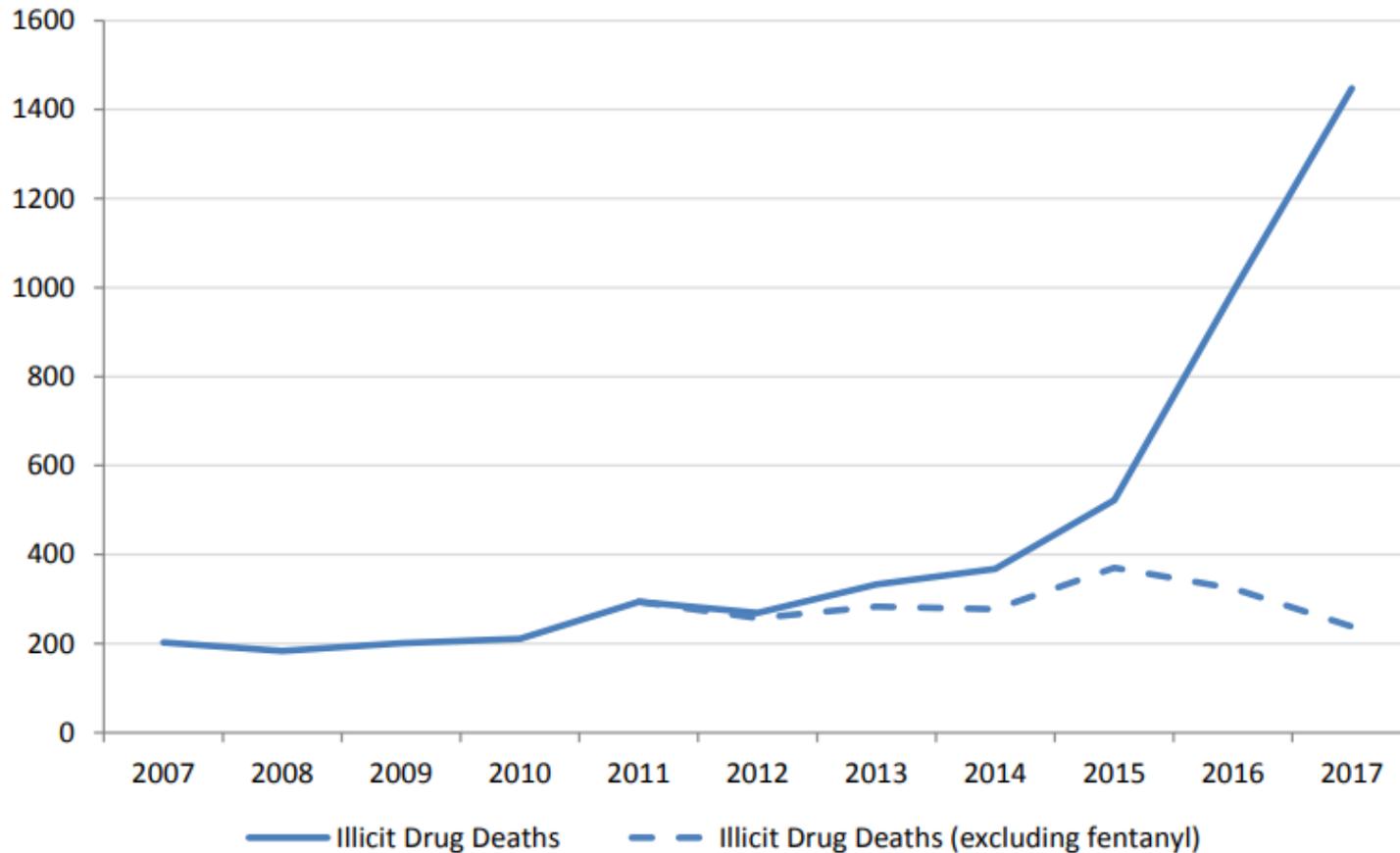
**Rebecca Thomas**  
**Vancouver Coastal Health Authority**

May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018

No conflict of interest to declare

# BC Public Health Emergency

Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths including and excluding Fentanyl, 2007-2017



# Overdose Reporting

- Not real-time
- Not easily accessible
- Drug contaminants change too fast
- Word of mouth spreads faster

Vancouver Coastal Health  
Promoting wellness. Ensuring care.

VCH Harm Reduction  
August 4, 2015  
Remove by Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 2015

## Overdose Alert: Fake Oxys

Fake oxycodone pills can contain fentanyl and might look like:

- Green or white pills
- Marked with '80', '10', or 'CDN'



See <http://www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/CCSA-CCENDU-Oxycontin-Fentanyl-Alert-2014-en.pdf>

Fentanyl is toxic at low doses and even small amounts can cause overdose. ODs can look like:

- Person doesn't respond to noise or pain
- Slow or no pulse
- Lips or skin are blue

**Call 911 right away if someone ODs**

If you choose to use, please use carefully:

- Try not to use alone
- Avoid mixing with other drugs or alcohol
- Use just a little at first

# Aims

- Identify & develop a mechanism for integrating a new data collection tool (real-time community reports) with existing data streams to trigger a timely alert
- Explore and develop a mechanism for effectively disseminating data through timely alerts
  - Include targeted harm reduction messages to support safest possible substance use

# Stage 1: Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

9 focus groups with people who use drugs (PWUD) (n=42) and key informant interviews with service providers (n=19)

- Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, North Vancouver, Vancouver Proper, Richmond, Squamish, Gibsons, and Whistler

## PWUD

- Not much access to technology
- Around 1/3 have a cell phone, but half are flip phones
  - Youth in downtown have smartphones with data and/or Wifi

## Service Providers

- Most do not have a work phone but are willing to use personal smartphone
- Receive overdose alerts through email or the news

# Stage 1: Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Best way to receive and send alerts:

## PWUD

- Peer outreach (drop-in, verbal communication)
- Text message
- App (for youth)

## Service Providers

- Receive: email or text message
- Report: Web-based survey or text message

Text message + web-based survey

# Stage 2: Development of Overdose Reporting and Alert System

- Privacy Impact Assessment
  - Phone numbers are hidden
  - No identifiers are asked when submitting a 'bad dope' report
- Contract with WelTel



# Launch: July 2017



NEWS	BUSINESS	SPORTS	ARTS & LIFE	HOMES	TRAVEL	CAREERS	OBITS
ARTS & LIFE	HEALTH	LOCAL HEALTH	FEATURED:	VIDEOS	SPRING ARTS PREVIEW	BEST RI	

## Real time illegal drug warning project launched to combat overdoses

All texts are anonymous



# BAD DOPE

## (236) 999-DOPE

3 6 7 3

Text "alert"  
to get **overdose**  
alerts

Text "bad dope"  
if you see an  
**overdose**

Updated: July 11, 2017 11:49 AM PDT

### Vancouver health authority wants to hear from drug users about 'bad dope'

Overdose prevention worker says system a good idea, but bigger solutions needed to crisis

Liam Britten · CBC News · Posted: Aug 22, 2017 4:14 PM PT | Last Updated: August 22, 2017



Vancouver Coastal Health hopes more awareness of Real-time Drug Alert and Response (RADAR) will increase its use. (Rafferty Baker/CBC)

It has been six weeks since Vancouver Coastal Health launched an online program for drug users to report overdose-causing drugs, but so far the system has seen very little use.

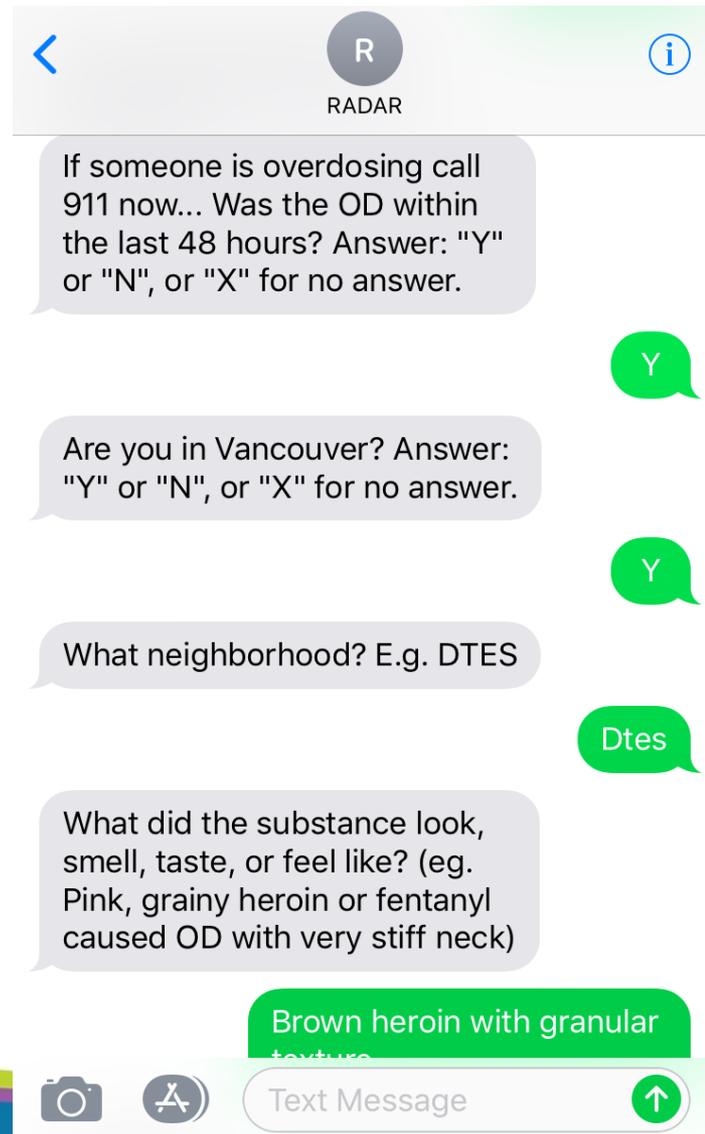
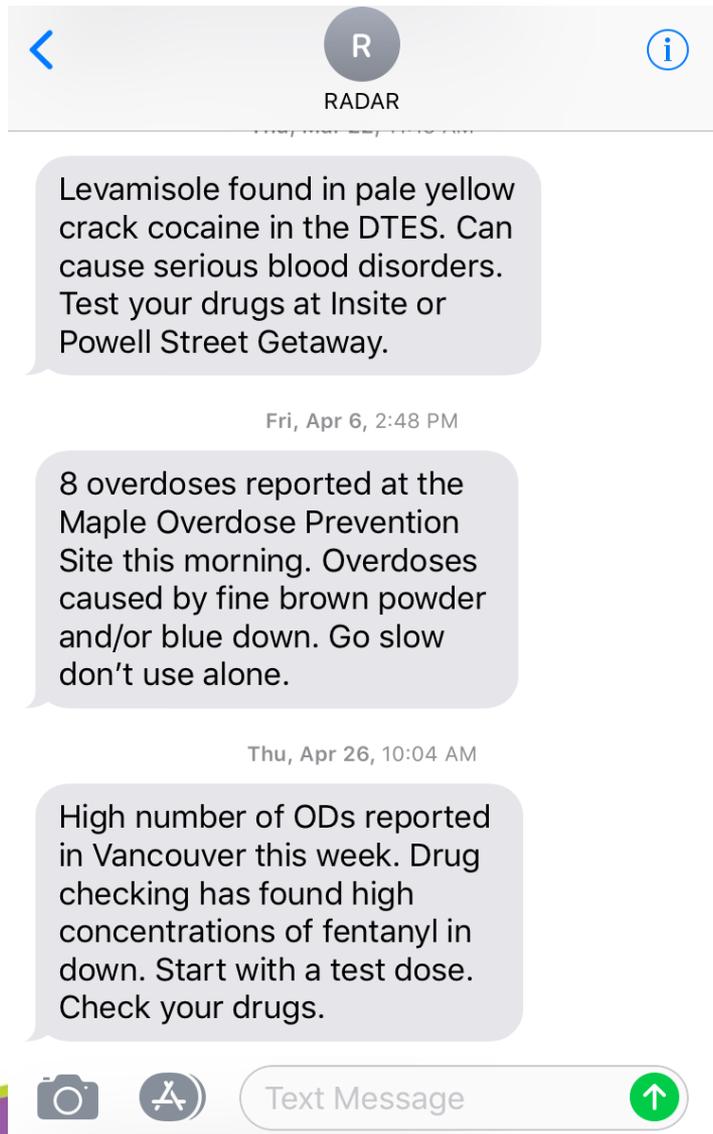


## Research project pilots new illegal drug alert warning system to help prevent overdoses

July 11, 2017

Vancouver – Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is working with the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) on a new project to develop a more timely and accurate way to communicate information about clusters of drug overdoses and drug contamination alerts.

# Stage 3: Piloting the RADAR System



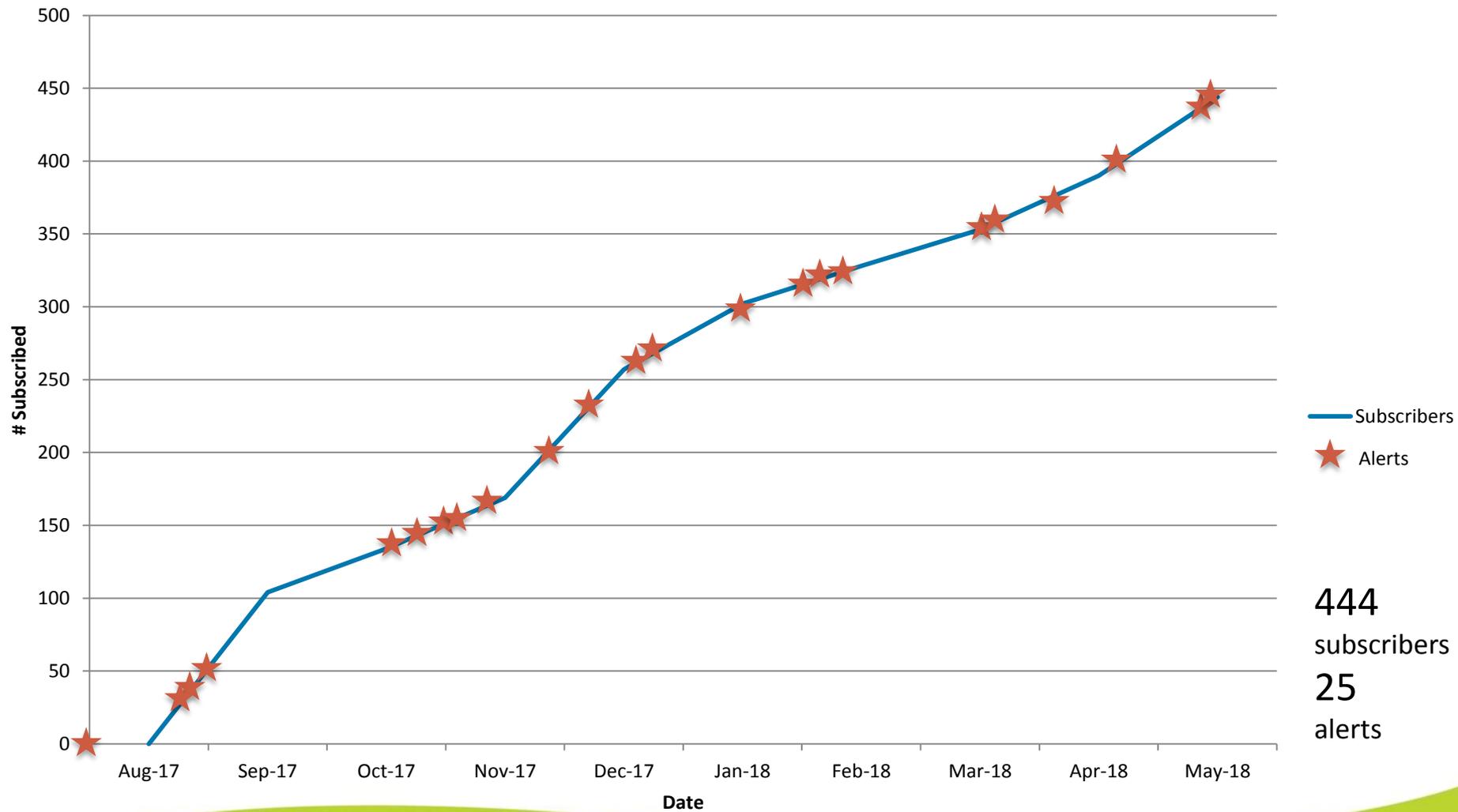
If someone is overdosing call 9-1-1 right away.

You can help us warn people about bad dope. If someone ODs tell us what happened and we will send out an overdose alert.

**This form is anonymous and you don't have to share your personal information. Vancouver Coastal Health checks this information M-F.**

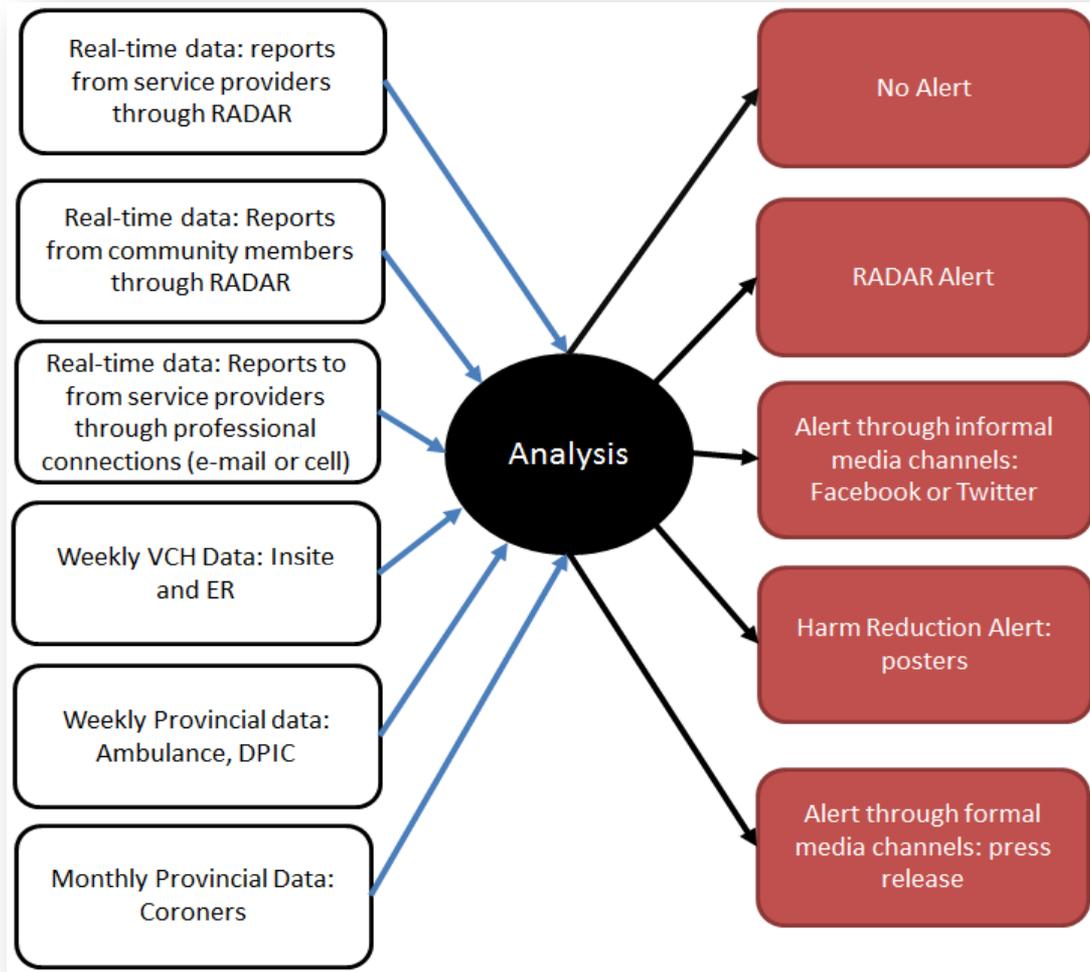
<b>When was the overdose?</b>	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Now"/> D-M-Y H:M <small>If exact date is not known, please provide your best guess.</small>
<b>What drug(s) were used?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Heroin <input type="checkbox"/> Fentanyl <input type="checkbox"/> Cocaine <input type="checkbox"/> Crystal Meth
<b>If other drug, specify:</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Did the drug look, taste, smell, or feel different than usual? Can you tell us what the drug/flap/baggie looked like?</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 100px;"></div> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">Expand</a></p>
<b>What happened to the person?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Could not stay awake <input type="checkbox"/> Slow or no breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Skin was pale or blue and cold <input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain <input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion and hallucinations <small>Check all that apply.</small>
<b>Did the person have any other reaction?</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>How was the drug used?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Injected <input type="checkbox"/> Smoked <input type="checkbox"/> Swallowed <input type="checkbox"/> Snorted <input type="checkbox"/> Other

# RADAR Subscribers and Alerts, August 2017-May 2018



**444**  
subscribers  
**25**  
alerts

# Alerting Process



# Stage 4: Evaluation

## Qualitative evaluation approach

- 4 focus groups with 20 PWUD and with on-site staff / outreach staff
- 3 key informant interviews

## Purpose:

- Explore perceived facilitators and barriers to adoption and ongoing success, acceptance, and sustainability of the RADAR program

## Stage 4: Evaluation

“Well I think it is very helpful for people to know that there is batches of ...you know of whatever people are buffing. People buff with all kinds of stuff so to be able to identify.”

“I think that the alerts are definitely helpful and I am enjoying the opportunity to give you feedback. I am just really disappointed that this is not provincial because I see a real need for this throughout the whole province and not just Vancouver Coastal area.”

“I think we as peers need to be able to identify the difference between confidential and anonymous as well. Because confidential means that they know who you are and your situation but they are bound by agreement not to share it. Whereas anonymous means, there is absolutely no identifying, nothing identifying in it, that they can identify who you are in any way.”

# Next Steps

Analysis of evaluation data over next 3-5 months

- Rapid Assessment Process (RAP)
- Descriptive analysis

Feasibility to expand provincially

- Sign up for alerts depending on region
  - Eg. Text “1 for Vancouver region, 2 for Fraser region 3 for all regions etc.”

# References:

BCCDC. (2017, July). *Research project pilots new illegal drug alert warning system to help prevent overdoses*. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/about/news-stories/news-releases/2017/research-project-pilots-new-illegal-drug-alert-warning-system-to-help-prevent-overdoses>

BC Coroners Service. (2018, May). *Illicit Drug Overdose Deaths in BC, January 1, 2008 – March 21, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/deathinvestigation/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

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# Questions?

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