

Safe injection site a success, studies suggest

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VANCOUVER (CP) -- The co-author of two new medical studies on a controversial safe injection site for illegal drug users in the city says researchers have only been able to find positive benefits from the program so far.

"Certainly, the results to date are very encouraging," Dr. Thomas Kerr of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS said Tuesday.

A two-year evaluation of the supervised injection site, called Insite, shows no increase in the rate of relapse among former drug users. In fact, the study found a substantial reduction in binge drug use.

Kerr said researchers had to consider the potential negative impacts that may be connected to Insite, which began operating in September 2003.

"I think it's no secret that when this facility opened there were many people who expressed the fear that this would make drug use in the community worse," he said.

Kerr said the facility may also be playing a role in breaking the cycle of HIV transmission in the city's Downtown Eastside, a slum where drugs are used openly in public.

The centre's second study found fewer HIV-positive drug users are sharing needles.

And for those who had all their injections at Insite, there were no instances of syringe sharing.

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