Overdose deaths and income assistance

Many people in the Downtown Eastside know that cheque day means more drug use and related harm.

This cycle of drug use and harm is also described in research

Riskier drug use
More overdoses
More hospital visits
Longer waits at Insite
More police interaction

The Project
This study looked at the timing of drug overdoses to see if cheque day was a cause of overdose deaths.

Overdose deaths were 40% higher in the two days after income and disability cheques were issued.

Results
There were 77 extra deaths over the five years connected to the way we distribute income assistance.

What's Next?
This study shows the need to look at other ways of distributing income assistance, like varying days or splitting payments into two. We are also reminded how important harm reduction and support services are, especially following cheque day.

This project was lead by the BC Centre for Disease Control
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