

President's Roundtable: UBC's Response to the Opioid Overdose Crisis

Preliminary Outcomes



Background

On April 3, 2018, Prof. Santa J. Ono, president and vice-chancellor of UBC, and Dr. Evan Wood, director of the BC Centre on Substance Use, co-hosted a community-university roundtable on UBC's response to the province-wide opioid overdose crisis. Front-line workers, policymakers, researchers and peers shared their ideas about how UBC could help address stigma related to substance use and addictions and help relieve the ongoing crisis. UBC's academic and administrative leadership—deans and vice-presidents—were listeners to the discussion.

UBC's Response: Ideas for Action

Several ideas were shared at the roundtable, from simple, short-term projects to more complex institutional initiatives. Major themes of the discussion included:

Teaching and learning: How could UBC improve curriculum and training for future and current front-line workers? What preparation do students need before practicum placements and community work?

Research and knowledge exchange: How to align UBC research with the needs of policymakers and community groups? How to improve public understandings of the evidence behind life-saving policy approaches? How to involve communities in research that impacts them?

UBC Campus Community: What harm reduction, addictions medicine, and recovery supports are in place for UBC faculty, staff and students? Are they adequate? How to address stigma in the UBC community?

Community Engagement: How can UBC help combat societal stigma about substance use and addictions? Where are opportunities for UBC to partner with and support community-based organizations?

Following the Roundtable, conversation highlights were recorded in an "ideas report" and shared strategically with both Roundtable participants and UBC leadership. (To protect the identities and confidentiality of participating organizations and individuals, the report has not been made public.)

An Update on UBC's Activities

After more than a year since the Roundtable, several new projects are underway at UBC, and seeds have been sewn for institutional change in key areas. Of the highlights that follow, some activities were initiated by University leadership in direct response to the Roundtable. Others were spearheaded by Roundtable participants inspired to act. Still others have no direct correlation to the Roundtable, but will nonetheless be of interest to participants given their relevance to the conversation and the topic at hand. All are works in progress. We look forward to continuing and refining these efforts until they are no longer needed.

Direct Outcomes of the Roundtable: Institutional Actions

- UBC continues to actively support the work of the BC Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU). Since the Roundtable, the BCCSU has become a research centre within the UBC Faculty of Medicine, with 15 principal investigators and new professorships in substance use based at UBC.
- Under the leadership of Dr. Dermot Kelleher, dean, Faculty of Medicine and VP Health, the UBC Health portfolio is enhancing collaboration across health faculties and schools. An important component of the collaborative

health education approach will be strengthening evidence-based approaches in the area of substance use and addictions medicine.

- A senior-level working group was appointed by UBC President Santa Ono to undertake actions with immediate, short-term impact. Working group activities included:

Gathering more information about substance-use patterns, overdose risk, and supports in place for UBC faculty, staff and students ...

- No overdoses have occurred on UBC campuses. Overall, UBC faculty, staff and students not a high-risk population for overdose.
- UBC has followed BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) guidelines for harm reduction on its campuses.
- UBC Student Housing provides information about the opioid crisis and relevant harm reduction strategies to each new student when they move into student housing.
- Naloxone nasal spray is available in a wall-mounted dispenser box adjacent to the AED in some student residences.
- UBC Campus Security carry Naloxone nasal spray and can respond quickly in the event of an emergency.
- UBC Student Development & Services distributes Naloxone kits to students and works with on-campus partners, including student groups, to provide workshops and training.
- Naloxone kits and training are also widely available at all UBC pharmacies.
- Faculty, staff and their families can access opiate agonists through UBC's extended health benefits provider. There was a slow increase in claimants between 2013/14 and 2018/19.
- A question about students' substance use patterns will be included in the new Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS) in January 2020.

Developing and supporting initiatives that help combat stigma and share evidence-based approaches with the public ...

- UBC Media Relations is implementing a comprehensive communications plan to proactively share UBC substance-use and addictions research with the public. The plan includes a brand journalism story in collaboration with UBC Health, the BC Centre on Substance Use and the BC Centre for Disease Control. The brand journalism story and related anti-stigma resources will be the focus of the UBC Integrated Content Strategy in Summer 2019, wherein UBC Media Relations, UBC Internal Communications, and UBC Brand and Marketing work together to distribute the content widely.
- Alongside the City of Vancouver and others, UBC is a sponsor of the new Megaphone Speaker's Bureau (see Figure 1). Through workshops and public events, the Speaker's Bureau helps individuals, businesses and service providers understand and respond compassionately to drug use in their communities. Various faculty and



Figure 1: Screenshot of Megaphone Speakers Bureau website. UBC is a sponsor of the workshops and public events.

staff, and students in the Law & Society stream of the Coordinated Arts Program have participated in the workshops.

Improving information about harm reduction, addictions support and recovery services available to faculty, staff and students ...

- Harm reduction and addiction services resources were made available at 2018 student orientation events, and in the President's welcome message to all incoming students.
- UBC Human Resources has added a new page, Substance Use and Addictions Support Resources, to its website for faculty and staff. A communications plan is underway to share this new page with faculty and staff.

Establishing need for new supports for UBC Students who are seeking or in recovery...

- UBC students living on campus have and will continue to have the option to share accommodation with roommates who've indicated they do not use substances.
- UBC Student Health Services is supporting student-led efforts to establish a collegiate recovery program at UBC. PhD student Sara Fudjack's study explores the experiences of UBC students living in recovery from alcohol and other drugs, with the goal of enhancing recovery-inclusive supports and services on UBC's campus. Findings and recommendations will be disseminated to UBC stakeholders, including the Office of the President, Student Health & Wellbeing, and Student Development & Services.



Figure 2: Screenshot of UBC Human Resources page, "Substance Use and Addictions Support Resources."

Non-Roundtable Collaborations and Initiatives

While not direct outcomes of the Roundtable, the following new initiatives and collaborations relate to the conversation, and may be of interest to Roundtable participants:

- The BCSSU partnered with UBC Continuing Professional Development (UBC CPD) to develop the Provincial Opioid Addiction Treatment Support Program, an online learning program paired with an in-person preceptorship in order to improve access and provincial capacity for opioid agonist treatment education for health professionals. As a result of this successful partnership, the BCSSU also redesigned its Online Addiction Medicine Diploma program into the Addiction Care and Treatment Online Certificate in partnership with UBC CPD and the UBC School of Nursing using the same platform.

- In May 2019, the BCCSU hosted its first annual provincial substance use conference, bringing together nearly 650 key stakeholders from around the province to discuss provincial efforts to treat and care for people with substance use disorders. In partnership with the UBC CPD Conference Management team, this three day event included research, education, and clinical care guidance presentations and workshops across several topics within substance use including opioid, alcohol, and cannabis use disorders.
- In Fall 2018, UBC Dean of Education Blye Frank focused his annual alumni lecture on the impacts of the opioid crisis within the educational community.
- M-J Milloy was named the inaugural Canopy Growth Professor of Cannabis Science – a new UBC professorship that will lead clinical trials into the potential of using cannabis to help people getting treatment for opioid use disorder.
- The [UBC Learning Exchange](#) in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood is increasing its capacity to support community-based research initiatives.
 - The Learning Exchange has received new strategic funding to expand its supports for community-based research in the DTES, including a new Community-Based Research Coordinator on staff.
 - The Learning Exchange has been working with members of the DTES-based *Community Ethics in Cultural Production* project to convene members of the research ethics review boards from UBC, SFU, and Providence Health Care. The goal of these meetings is to empower community and university members to ensure that ethical and respectful practices are incorporated into all future proposals for research and engagement in the DTES. This conversation is ongoing.
- A new unit, the UBC Knowledge Exchange, was established to make academic knowledge more accessible, understandable and relevant to local communities.
- In October 2018, UBC’s First Aid Student Team (FAST) hosted an educational booth on overdose first aid and Naloxone at the Helping Hearts mass first aid training. Close to 300 people participated.

Conclusion

This report was meant to capture and share Roundtable outcomes and related events in the hope that the simple act of sharing information accelerates solutions—the theoretical underpinning of the Roundtable itself. As is the nature of events like this, the outcomes do not necessarily flow in a linear or easy-to-follow path, which can make reporting difficult. If you or the group you work with were involved in the President’s Roundtable and if your work is not represented in this document, please contact the Community Engagement Office at UBC (community.engagement@ubc.ca) to have the document updated to reflect your work.