

## **Injectable Opioid Agonist Treatment (iOAT) at Johnson Street Community in Victoria**

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### **What is iOAT?**

Injectable Opioid Agonist Treatment – iOAT, provides pharmaceutical grade opioids for injection to people who have not been successful with oral opioid agonist treatment options. It is an additional treatment for people with opioid use disorder, and works best when combined with other types of support.

### **Why do we need iOAT?**

iOAT has been proven effective for treating people with opioid use disorder, and is one more way we can address overdose deaths. iOAT is designed to prevent withdrawal symptoms, manage cravings, and reduce the potential harms of intravenous drug use, such as overdose and infections.

### **How is iOAT different from oral OAT?**

iOAT is specifically for those individuals who have not benefited from oral opioid agonist treatment alone (i.e. methadone, buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone), and/or slow-release oral morphine). For patients who are not able to stop or reduce use of non-medical opioids with other options, iOAT offers an evidence-based alternative. Clients will come to the clinic two to three times a day to receive their medications in a supervised, clinical setting.

### **Why is iOAT only offered at this location?**

This is the first program in the Island Health region to include iOAT services. Island Health will evaluate this service and may consider opportunities to expand the service to additional locations.

### **How many people will be started on iOAT?**

Initially, six people who reside at Johnson Street Community will begin iOAT treatment. The number of participants will be increased to 20 people over the first month.

### **How will people be selected for the iOAT program?**

Participants will be residents at 844 Johnson Street, and will be identified by their primary care provider, their interdisciplinary clinical team or by self-referral. Once referrals are received by the iOAT clinical team, participants will be triaged based on suitability and availability of the iOAT program. Discharges from the program will be directed by the client and the advice of the medical team.

**What happens to people who continue to use fentanyl and other opioids while on iOAT?**

Continued use of illegal or non-medical opioids while on iOAT should be considered an indication to assess the patient and consider intensifying treatment either through additional medications, dosage adjustments or transferring to more intensive models of care. Patients will be assessed prior to receiving their dose, and if they are intoxicated their dose can be postponed or withheld.

**Should the public be concerned about iOAT programs causing security and public safety issues?**

iOAT patients take their medication in a supervised setting which ensures the safety of patients and people in the community. Randomized controlled trials in the Netherlands, UK and Canada found that people receiving iOAT have no negative effects on public safety. A Vancouver study demonstrated that iOAT has high retention rates, reduces use of illegal opioids and decreases illegal activities.

**Why should my tax dollars go toward providing free iOAT?**

Economic evaluations have consistently found that the effective treatment of opioid use disorder reduces health care costs. People receiving iOAT have improved health outcomes and stability, reduced risk of overdose and death, as well as a decreased risk of infection and blood-borne illness, such as hepatitis C and HIV.

For more information on OAT, please see [islandhealth.ca/oat](http://islandhealth.ca/oat)

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