



Safer Supply – Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Q. What is Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy?
- A. **Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy (TiOAT) is a medication-assisted treatment for people who have not benefitted from other treatment options and are at high risk of overdose. This life-saving initiative will provide pharmaceutical-grade medications as an alternative to the toxic drug supply.**
- Q. How is the medication provided?
- A. **TiOAT will be provided as one or two 8mg hydromorphone tablets up to five times each day. Tablets will usually be crushed for injection but may be taken orally or inhaled. All consumption will take place in a supervised setting.**
- Q. Who can access the program?
- A. **TiOAT is prioritized for people who have not had success with other treatment services, such as OAT, and those deemed appropriate by the prescriber's clinical assessment. Up to 25 people can participate in this program. People will be screened for suitability and can be identified by local doctors and health-care providers, service providers and through self-referral.**
- Q. Are 'carries' or take-home medications allowed?
- A. **Initially, the pilot will offer on-site consumption only. We will evaluate the service for opportunities to provide take-home medication.**
- Q. Where will the program be located?
- A. **TiOAT will be available at the Cowichan Wellness and Recovery Centre, 5878 York Road, Duncan. It will be part of a suite of services available at the Centre, including primary care, harm reduction, case management, overdose prevention and additional treatments.**
- Q. Who provides the service and when is it open?
- A. **The TiOAT service will be provided by a local non-profit provider 7 days a week, and people can attend up to five times a day. Hours to be determined.**
- Q. Why Cowichan?
- A. **The Cowichan Valley was identified for this pilot TiOAT program for a number of reasons:**
- **The overdose data indicates that the Cowichan Valley is a high priority for overdose prevention and response work.**
 - **Multiple community stakeholders including local government were interested in pursuing this approach.**
 - **Island Health wanted to prioritize a smaller urban setting so that this pilot project would increase our understanding of how a service like this might meet the needs of individuals in a smaller community.**

- Q. Should the public be concerned about safer supply programs causing security and public health issues?
- A. **Evidence shows that there are no negative effects on public safety related to similar programs, such as injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy. These programs have been shown to reduce illegal activities and reduce street opioid use.¹ Clients take their medication in a supervised setting which ensures the safety of patients and people in the community, and provides an opportunity for patients to engage with other types of health care they may need.**
- Q. How is community safety and security being addressed?
- A. **The program will be offered in a location that is regularly patrolled by security services, provided in partnership with local government through the Safer Communities Plan. Sharps (needle) collection will continue through the existing partnerships and will be expanded as a result of recent CAI funding. Island Health and the service provider are committed to ensuring security, safety and ongoing community dialogue.**
- Q. Is this model proven to be successful?
- A. **TiOAT is an innovative treatment for people with opioid dependency that is being piloted across the province. Early findings from Canadian evidence has found that using pharmaceutical-grade medications, such as hydromorphone, as an alternative to highly toxic street drugs for people at risk of overdose, can help to save lives and improve health outcomes. It can also help establish an entry to care and treatment for people with substance use disorder. This pilot will be evaluated by the BC Centre for Substance Use.**
- Q. Who funds the project?
- A. **Island Health received approximately \$2 million in funding through Health Canada in partnership with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions. Funding for this project is provided through Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP). Island Health also provides significant in-kind support to the project.**

¹ CRISM National Injectable Opioid Agonist Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder. Retrieved from: <https://crism.ca/projects/ioat-guideline/> on July 20, 2020