Scientific and programmatic implications of safer injection facilities for persons who inject drugs illicitly

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Abstract

Background: Persons who inject drugs (PWID), particularly those who inject in streets, alleys, and parks, use needles and syringes used by others, or use unclean drug-preparation equipment (cotton, cookers, or water) are at risk for HIV, HBV, and HCV infections. To reduce risk for infectious diseases and improve health outcomes, cities in Australia, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland established safer injection facilities (SIFs) following establishment of legal support. SIFs provide clean injection environments, sterile injection equipment, and clean drug-preparation equipment at the time of injection.

Method: We reviewed and summarized the published scientific evidence (PubMed, EMBASE, Psychlnfo) and appraised the programmatic

Results: At SIFs, persons can more safely inject drugs that they have purchased outside of the facility. SIF management and staff do not assist in injection. SIFs safely dispose of used equipment and provide on-site counseling, referral to addiction treatment and health services, and overdose emergency assistance. SIFs limit transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, and bacterial infections, reduce overdose mortality, prevent accidental needle stick injuries to community members, reduce public nuisance and litter, and improve health outcomes and public safety. As cost-saving and costeffective interventions, SIFs offer unique and complementary benefits, as compared to other effective interventions (prevention and treatment of drug abuse, syringe exchange programs, non-prescription pharmacy sale of sterile injection equipment, safe disposal programs for used equipment community overdose prevention programs, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases) which often are not available to all persons who use drugs. Through collaboration with community members, law enforcement officers, persons who inject drugs, service providers, and public health scientists and practitioners, SIFs can meet needs of users and communities.

Conclusions: SIF services, within a multipronged intervention approach, address complex social and public health consequences of injection drug use and ameliorate the negative effects of injection drug use on users and communities.

Semaan S, Fleming P, Worrell C, Stolp H, Baack B, Miller M. (2011). Potential role of safer injection facilities in reducing HIV and Hepatitis C infections and overdose mortality in the United States. Drug and Alcohol Dependence. 118, 100-110

Objective

To identify the scientific and programmatic implications of SIFs for PWID and their communities

- Persons who inject drugs (PWID) are at increased risk for infection with HIV, Hepatitis B virus (HBV), and Hepatitis C virus (HCV).
- In the United States ~ 9-16% of PWID have HIV, 2% in Australia, and 10% in the Netherlands. 1
- Prevalence of Hepatitis C (HCV) is highest among PWID.² • Drug overdoses have increased five – fold in the past decade in the U.S.³
- PWID suffer higher mortality rates due to overdoses.4
- Public injection is common and constitutes a public nuisance.⁵
- PWID attendance at shooting galleries remain high.
- Australia, Canada, Germany, Luxemberg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland have established safer injection facilities (SIFs) to reduce risk for HIV, HBV, and HCV and improve health outcomes for PWIDs.



Role of Safer Injection Facilities (SIFs)

- SIFs are sites that provide PWID with a clean injection environment and sterile syringes and drug- preparation
- SIFs have on-site health care services and emergency care.
- SIFs aim to reduce public injection and risk of infection with HIV, HBV, HCV, other infections, and drug
- SIF management and staff do not provide the drugs or assist with injection. PWID buy the drugs outside SIFs. ■ SIFs serve high risk PWID who are addicted to injecting heroine, cocaine, methamphetamine, or "speedball" (heroin and cocaine combined).

- We searched PubMed, EMBASE, and PsychInfo for SIF evaluations.
- We reviewed and summarized findings from studies
- We appraised programmatic implications of SIFs as identified in the literature.

Results:

Educational and Behavioral Outcomes

Wood, et al. ⁷	2005	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the Scientific Evaluation of Supervised Injecting (SEOSI)	Prospective cohort	* 33.5% of SIF users received safer injecting education
Kerr, et al.8	2005	Vancouver, Canada	PWID enrolled in the Vancouver Injection Drug Users Study	Cross-sectional	SIF use is independently associated with reduced syringe sharing (AOR=0.30, [0.11-0.82], p=0.02)
Petrar, et al. ⁹	2007	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients	Cross-sectional	 75% reported change in their injecting behavior as a result of SIF use 80% report less rushed injecting; 71% report less outdoor injecting; 56% report less unsafe disposal of needles
Stoltz, et al. ¹⁰	2007	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients	Cross-sectional	Consistent SF use is associated with less often reusing syringes (0Re-2.16, [1.48-3.16], p.0.001); less runbte during injection (0Re-2.94, [2.14-4.02], p-0.001); less injection quotions (0Re-2.99, [2.13-4.21], p-0.001); using clean water for injecting (0Re-3.02, [2.03-4.49], p-0.001); cooking of littening drups prior to injecting (0Re-3.02, [2.03-4.49], p-0.001); typing off prior to injection (0Re-2.16, [1.79-4.64], p-0.001); and injection (0Re-2.16, [1.79-4.64]) p-0.001; assign finding a vein (0Re-2.78, [1.93-4.01], p-0.001; and injecting in a clean price (0Re-3.00, [2.22-4.06, p-0.001).
Wood, et al. ¹¹	2008	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the SEOSI	Prospective cohort	46.6% of SIF users received safer injection education SIF users receiving safer injection education were previuosly at higher risk of injection-related harm
Fast. et al. ¹²	2008	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the SEOSI	Cross-sectional	Over time the SIF environment promotes the adoption of safer injecting practices within and outside the SIF
Bravo, et al. ¹³	2009	Madrid and Barcelona, Spain	Young heroin drug injectors enrolled in the ITINERE study	Cross-sectional	 SIF users are more often regular injectors (OR = 4.9, [2.7-8.8]), speedball users (OR=2.5, [1.5-4.3]) and anti-HCV-positive (OR=3.1, [1.4-7.1]) SIF use is independently associated with not borrowing used syringes (OR=3.3, [1.4-7.7])

■ Canada (Vancouver)

- One-third of SIF users received safe injection education from SIF staff members during one year of service (Wood et al.,2005c,2008b).
- 75% of SIF users adopted safer injection practices outside of the SIF (Petrar etal., 2007).

■ Spain (Madrid and Barcelona)

• Use of SIFs was associated independently with higher likelihood of not borrowing used syringes (OR = 3.3, 95% CI: 1.4-7.7)(Bravo et al., 2009).

Health Outcomes (1)

Salmon, et al.		Sydney, Australia	SIF clients enrolled in the MSIC Client Survey and the Australian NSP Survey	Cross-sectional and Prospective cohort	- 84% of those who received a referral attended the referred service - Those living in unstable living accommodations and were HCV positive serostatus were twice as likely to receive a brokerage referral to drug treatment - 1/3 of those who received a drug treatment referral had not previously accessed any form of drug treatment - 43% of clients had injected in public in the month prior to registration
Salmon, et al.			Suspected opioid-related overdoses attended by an ambulance	Ecological study	$68\%\ decrease\ in\ ambulance\ serviced\ opioid-related\ overdoses\ in\ SIF\ district\ compared\ to\ 61\%\ ambulance\ serviced\ opioid-related\ overdoses\ outside\ the\ district\ (\chi 2=9.62,\ p\mbox{-value}=0.002)$
Kimber, et al.		European SIFs	European SIFs	Cross-sectional	No overdose deaths occurred at SIF and low rate of non-fatal overdoses (range from 1 to 36 per 10,000 visits)

Health Outcomes (2)

Αu	thors	Year	Location	Population	Study Design	Finding/Conclusions
Wo	ood, et al. ¹⁴	2006	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the Scientific Evaluation of Supervised Injecting (SEOSI)	Cross-sectional	 18 percent of SIF users began a detoxification program during the 344 day follow-up Entry into detoxification program is independently associated with SIF use (ARH148) daysted relative hazard)=1.72, [1.25-2.38], pv0.001] and contact with the facility's addiction counselor (ARH=1.98, [1.26-3.10], pv0.003)
Ke	rr, et al. ¹⁵	2007	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the SEOSI	Cross-sectional	Prevent overdose deaths and manage overdose emergencies
Sm	all, et al.16		Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the SEOSI	Cross-sectional	SIF provides access to health care and social services SIF effectively manage injection-related infections
Mi	lloy, et al. ¹⁷	2008	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients	Cross-sectional	SIF use was not associated with non-fatal overdose (OR=1.05, p=0.73) Between 8 and 51 overdose deaths were averted by SIF between 2004 and 2006
Pin	kerton, et al.18		Vancouver, Canada	Projected HIV incidence	Mathematical Modeling	SIF prevented an estimated 83.5 cases of HIV
An	derson and Boyd ¹⁹		Vancouver, Canada	Projected HIV incidence and mortality	Mathematical Modeling	SIF prevented an estimated 35 cases of HIV and avoided 3 deaths
De	Beck, et al. ²⁰		Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients	Cross-sectional	Initiation of addiction treatment is independently associated with regular SIF use (adjusted hazard ratio (AHR)=1.33 [1.04-1.72]) and having contact with the SIF addiction counselor (AHR=1.54 [1.13-2.08])

■ Canada (Vancouver)

 Weekly use of SIF including contact with SIFs addiction counselors was associated with a more rapid entry into detoxification programs (Wood et al., 2006b).

■ Australia (Sydney)

- Following the opening of the SIF in Sydney, there was a 68% decrease in the average monthly number of ambulance attendances in its vicinity (Salmon et al., 2010).
- Germany (Hamburg, Frankfurt, Hanover, and Saarbrücken), Netherlands (Apeldoorn and Rotterdam), Spain (Madrid), and Switzerland (Basel, Bern, Solothurn, and Schaffhausen)
 - No fatal overdoses were reported.
 - A majority of respondents perceived that the SIF contributed to a reduction in overdose deaths and events (Kimber et al., 2005).

Community Outcomes

Wood, et al. ²¹	2004	Vancouver, Canada	PWID in Vancouver	Prospective cohort	 SF establishment is independently associated with reductions in the number of drug users injecting in public (p < 0.001), publicly discarded syringes (p < 0.001) and injection-related litter (p < 0.001). No increase in drug acquisition crime, rates of new 1001s or relapse
Petrar, et al. ⁹	2007	Vancouver, Canada	SIF dients		* 71% indicated that the SIF has led to less outdoor injecting * 56% reported less unsafe syringe disposal
DeBeck, et al. ²²	2008	Vancouver, Canada	SIF clients enrolled in the Scientific Evaluation of Supervised Injecting (SEOSI)	Cross-sectional	* 16.7% of clients reported having been referred to the SIF by the local police * 2% learned about the SIF from police * Police referral is associated with sex work (AOR=1.80, [1.28-2.53], daily cocaine injection (AOR=1.54, [1.14-2.08]), and unsafe syringe disposal (AOR=1.46, [1.00-2.11])
Fairbairn, et al. ²³	2008	Vancouver, Canada	SIF dients enrolled in the SEOSI	Cross-sectional	SIFs provide refuge for women from violence and gendered norms that shape drug preparation and consumption practices
Zurhold, et al. ²⁴	2003	Hamburg, Germany	Drug users, staff members of the CRs, and representatives from the community (neighborhood residents, business people, police, and politicians)	Cross-sectional	SIFs reach the target group of drug users who practice risky behaviors and engage in public drug use SIFs played an important role in the reduction of public disturbances in the vicinity of open drug scenes
Hedrich, et al. ²⁵	2004	European SIFs	N/A	Literature review	• SIFs reach the targeted population of long-term addicts, street injectors, homeless drug users, and drug-using sex workers. • SIFs are duce public injection • SIFs have greater impact where there is a political consensus as part of a comprehensive local demand reduction strategy. • There is no evidence that the operation of a SIF results in a decrease or increase in the number of improperly discarded syringes and needles.

Community Outcomes

■ Canada (Vancouver)

- The neighborhoods around the SIF exhibited decreased public injection and litter (Wood et al., 2004a,
- SIFs use was associated with reduced risk for violence against women who inject drugs (Fairbairn et al., 2008)

■ Germany (Hamburg)

- SIFs have become important alternatives to public drug use.
- Since the opening of the SIFs, public drug use has noticeably decreased (Zurhold et al., 2003).

- SIFs reached older, long-term users some of whom have had no previous contact with substance abuse treatment.
- SIFs attracted particularly PWID who are difficult to reach.
- SIFs suggested that they do not encourage initiation of naive users into injecting drugs (Hedrich et al.,

Estimated Economic Outcomes

Authors	Year	Location	Population	Study Design	Finding/Conclusions
Bayoumi and Zaric	2008			Mathematical modeling	SIF establishment and health benefits of SIFs are associated with an incremental net savings of > \$18 million and 1175 life-years gained over 10 yrs.
Andresen and Boyd	2010	Vancouver, Canada		Mathematical modeling	SIF stablishment provides a societal benefit in excess of \$6 million per year (after the programme costs) SIFs provide an average benefit-cost ratio of 5:1
Pinkerton, et al.	2010			Mathematical modeling	 SIF saves \$17.6 million in life-time HIV-related medical care costs Savings greatly exceeds insite's operating costs of ~ \$3 million per year.

■ Canada (Vancouver)

- SIF prevents 35 new cases of HIV and 3 overdose deaths annually, furnishing a societal benefit in excess of CDN \$6 million annually (after accounting for the estimated annual program cost of CDN\$1.5million), and providing an average benefit-cost ratio of 5:1(Andresen and Boyd, 2010).
- SIF was cost-effective by saving CDN \$18 million and 1175 life-years during 10 years, through averting 1517 HIV infections and 68 HCV infections (Bayoumi and Zaric, 2008).

Programmatic Concerns and Solutions

Identification of Concerns	Minimization of Concern
Risks to privacy and confidentiality of SIF users (i.e. protection from losing job, social stigmatization, isolation, criminalization)	Implement procedures and protocols to protect unique identifiers and maintain confidentiality of data
Community beliefs that SIFs: • Encourage risky behavior • Negazitwe' inmact public order • Suggest that the society condones drug use	Effectively communicate data from evaluation studies that disprove common myths about SIFs Communicate that the goal of SIFs is to provide secondary prevention to decrease individual and public harm
Negative attitudes towards PWID or the belief that PWID are not deserving of SIF services	 Partner with health care providers to decrease stigmatization and disprove misguided beliefs about PWID Engage in a discussion of human rights, medical ethics, social justice and research evidence with the public
U.S. Federal Controlled Substances Act may be interpreted to ban SIFs	Adopt strategies (community consultations, public and political engagement, and program piloting) used in other developed countries to ensure that SIFs are legal and safe to protect the interests of PWID and SIF staff
Belief that funding is better spent on preventing or treating injection drug use (DJ)	SIFs are proven to be cost-saving and cost-effective. SIFs provide access to resources for drug treatment and addiction counseling
SIFs may replace other secondary prevention programs (i.e. SEPs, pharmacy non- prescription sale of injection equipment, safe disposal programs, and community overdose prevention programs)	While SIFs provide unique and comprehensive services, other secondary prevention programs remain crucial to harm reduction initiatives; These programs complement SIF services
SIFs may further marginalize PWID	Work to integrate SIF services into other public health programs

- PWID need to be aware of SIF services, have access to the SIFs in their area, and find them to be an acceptable option
- Results showed that 85% of PWID in San Francisco would use a SIF, if made available; 5 93% of PWID who inject in public in New York City would use a SIF, if made available.²⁶
- SIFs need to be established in public settings that are easily accessible by PWID (e.g., via public transport).
- SIFs need to target high-risk PWID who need SIF services:
- PWID who inject in public, are homeless, are at risk of overdose, work in the sex industry, engage in frequent or unsafe injecting behaviors, at high risk of viral or bacterial infections, or are part of a high-risk
- SIFs must serve those who do not have access to other prevention programs.
- SIFs capacity and coverage need to meet the needs of PWID as indicated by local epidemiological data.
- SIFs in Europe, Australia, and Canada provide sufficient evidence for the public health benefits, cost-benefit,
- SIFs provide an environment for PWID to safely inject pre-obtained drugs to reduce blood-borne and bacterial infections and overdose mortality.
- SIFs provide settings and interventions that support safer behaviors.

Programmatic and Scientific Implications

- SIFs provide benefits to local communities by reducing public injection, nuisance, and unsafe disposal of needles
- Local evaluation studies are needed to assess operational aspects, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of SIFs for PWID and their communities
- More rigorous studies are needed to assess long-term benefits.

Conclusions

- PWID are disproportionately infected with HIV, HBV, and HCV and affected by overdose mortality.
- PWID often lack sufficient access to public health services.

injection drug users? Am. J. Prev. Med. 29, 126-130.

- SIFs offer unique and complementary services to meet the needs of high-risk and underserved PWIDs. ■ SIFs are worthy of serious consideration by public health providers and policy makers.
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