

Community Pharmacists Improving Healthcare for a Vulnerable Population



Megan Peters, Deirdre Magee, Rebecca Lukey, AS (Consumer)



"I'd like it reduced so that it was maybe just a ten year difference between us and them" (Consumer)



What we know....

- People prescribed Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST) for opioid dependence:
 - are an ageing population who have a biological age 15 years older than their chronological age,
 - die 25 years earlier on average than the general population,
 - take medication that has significant physical health implications.
- People collect OST from their pharmacy most days of the week, and a pharmacist is often the most accessible health provider for this group.

What consumers have told us...

Consumers have identified barriers to healthcare such as difficulties accessing a blood test, experiencing stigma when seeing health providers, or feeling disempowered when discussing genuine health concerns.

"As soon as someone hears the word methadone, the whole way they treat you changes..." (Consumer)

"...I don't know my GP like I know you here – seeing you guys every day I have more of a relationship with you". (Consumer)



"For years I have had problems with finding a vein ...it becomes frustrating when I really need to get one [blood test]". (Consumer)

What we are doing about it...

Pharmacists and a consumer representative are working collaboratively with 30 tāngata whaiora with opioid dependence from Victory Square Pharmacy, to **empower** and **engage** this cohort with health services, while supporting them to overcome barriers to achieving health equity.

➤ Support for people on OST to engage with health providers:

- Complex patients are receiving a clinical pharmacist medication review, and are being supported to attend DHB-funded appointments with their GP to receive a full cardio-metabolic screen.
- Some are requesting a pharmacist attend appointments with them as a clinical advocate. Some have met with their health provider in the consultation rooms at Victory Square Pharmacy

➤ Knowledgeable prescribers and informed consumers:

- Pharmacists are providing clinical education sessions to local GP practices and junior hospital doctors, about OST and its physical health implications.
- A "Clinical Pearls" information sheet has been developed, in consultation with Nelson Addiction Service and is being adopted by Health Pathways.
- Our consumers are working with us to develop a patient-friendly version to be made available through pharmacies, GP practices, and addiction services.

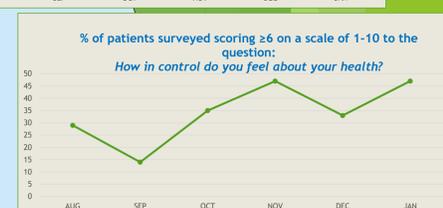
➤ Clear pathways:

- Addressing the barriers to accessing ECGs and blood tests, necessary for cardio-metabolic screening, for this patient group.



Results so far...

- **Engagement:** Most of the surveyed OST clients now feel comfortable asking questions or advice of their healthcare professional.
- **Empowerment:** A growing number of OST clients surveyed feel in control of their health..
- **Clear pathways:**
 - We have met with addiction services and cardiologists to discuss cardiology recommendations for people prescribed OST. Guidelines are now in the process of being formalised and uploaded on Health Pathways.
 - ECGs are now recommended as part of baseline screening.
 - We are still working to improve access to ultrasound guided phlebotomy.



"Everyone should have the same opportunities to be physically well." (Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui)