



## Safer Supply – Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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- 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 is provided as one or two 8mg hydromorphone tablets up to five times each day. Tablets are usually crushed for injection but may be taken orally or inhaled. All consumption takes 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 Opioid Agonist Therapy (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. **The pilot offers 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 is located 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 Lookout Health and Housing Society, a non-profit provider 7 days a week, and people can attend up to five times a day between the hours of 10:30 am and 7:00 pm.**
- 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 and prescription heroin. These programs have been shown to reduce illegal activities and reduce street opioid use.<sup>1</sup> 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 Community Action Initiative funding. Island Health and the service provider are committed to ensuring security, safety and ongoing community dialogue and has set up a Community Advisory Committee, comprised of a wide range of community members and perspectives, which will meet regularly to discuss services and concerns.**
- 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.**

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