Acceptability and Accessibility of Non-Contact Respiratory Monitors for People Who Use Drugs

1143 in 2018

The number of illicit drug-related overdose deaths up to September

128 deaths

September 2018 alone

86%

In private and other residences

85%

Without associated 911 call

People who use drugs alone, in a private residence, without any means to notify emergency services are the same individuals for whom supervised consumption sites may not be an option

Mobile devices

Sonar systems

Bluetooth technology

Built-in microphones

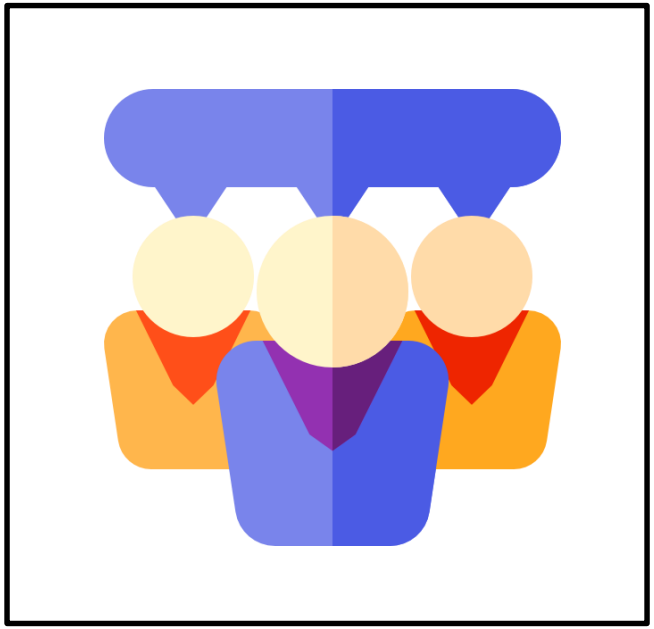
Automatic alarm

Ring continuously to notify bystanders, friends, and emergency services

Community Input

52 East Hastings Vancouver

DTES Street Market



Data Analysis

BC Harm Reduction Client Survey

Acceptability of mobile-supported applications

Local Client Survey

Demographic information and drug-use patterns

Qualitative Interviews

Personal experiences, subjective views on technological monitoring

Key Insights

Safety

- Not using alone
- Trusted dealers
- Route of administration + amount
- Exploring self-devised measures

Public vs Private

- SCS and OPS
- Stigma and identity
- Comfort of using at home

Role of Technology

- Availability of mobile devices
- Logistics of set-up
- Long-term feasibility
- Function of apps

Safety

Not Using Alone

“I only have one person that knows I use dilaudid and she lives on the same floor as me which is helpful but it’s a lot of pressure and responsibility on my friend…I always feel guilty”.

Trusted Dealers

“I’ve known [my dealer] for so long…that he even told me, ‘heads up, this is the best we could do…with maybe a bit of [fentanyl] in there. So ease up off it’… they’re good guys in that way

Safety

Administration

"*If I'm starting to get sick, I might add a bit extra. But always in the back of my head – because I have overdosed a couple of times…I'm not too willing to just push the threshold and just double what I'm capable of*"

Self-Derived Safety Measures

"You can tell if it's fent 'cause fentanyl will burn clear and won't leave any residue on the tinfoil – black burnt stuff is usually buffered heroin"

SCS + OPS

"You go to the OPS site and they're full, so you go to another one and they're full. And now you have to get back to work and you're sick and the OPS sites are all full"

Public vs Private

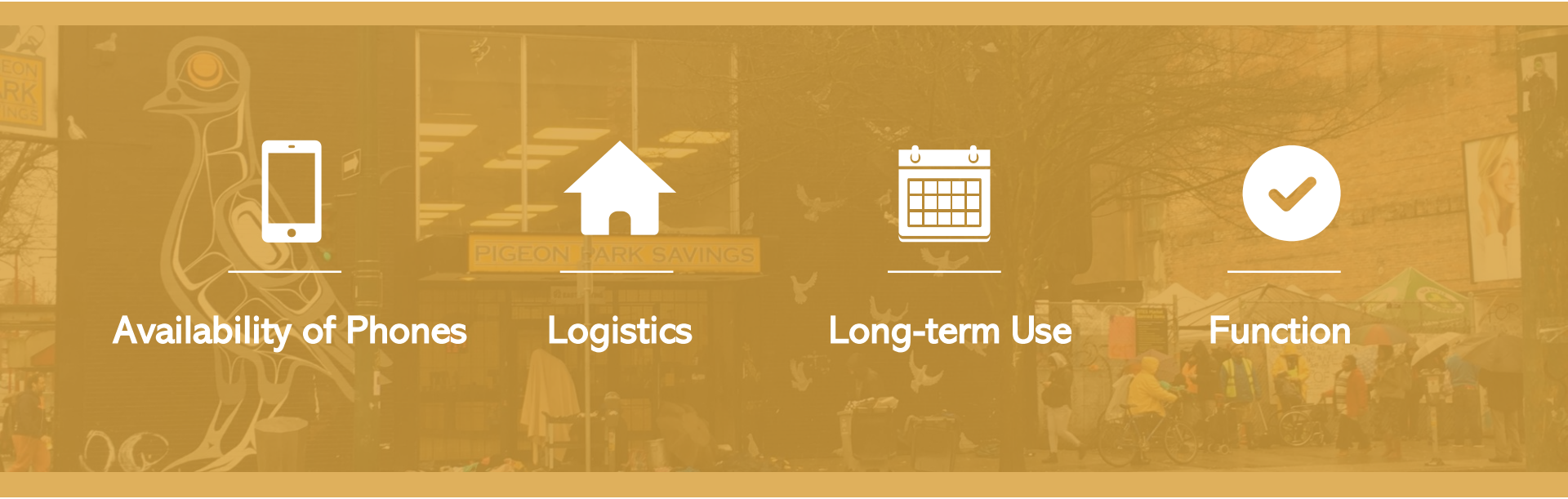
"If it wasn't for harm reduction sites…there'd be a lot more deaths out here than anything," he shared, "with the epidemic being as crazy as it is, there needs to be more sites"

Stigma

"*I do scripts like Percs, pills and those kinds of places are for people who do crystal meth and heroin. I don't feel comfortable there, because I don't do that kind of drug"*

"I've established respect because I volunteer in so many places. There's a lot of people that don't even know I use and they've known me for 18, 20 years. That's why I am not an outdoor user. I'm a private user"

Role of Technology



Availability of Phones

Logistics

Long-term Use

Function

Availability of Phones

"'I'll just sell them when I get desperate for drugs… sometimes going month after month"

- BC Harm Reduction Client Survey:
    - 45% participants have a phone
    - 68% able to make a call
    - 79% have internet access
- Clients may only have phones for a portion of the month
- Battery life
- Consistent access to Wi-Fi and data
- Stolen phones with private data

Feasibility

“You should go out of your way when it comes to safety…obviously your life is something you got to be careful with”

Logistics

- Housing status: SRO, shelter, streets
- Environment: home vs public space
- Frequency: device use every time vs “will try it out”

Role of Technology

Function of Apps

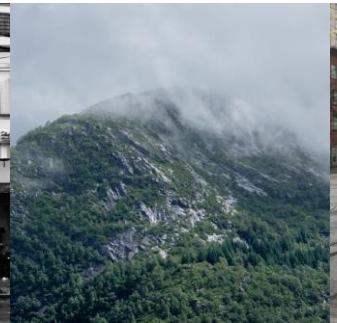
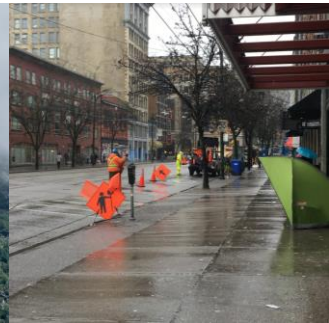
- Falling asleep vs overdosing
- Caution about “monitoring” and “cameras”
- Lack of privacy – chance to be “reported”

Suggested Ideas

- Machine to inject naloxone immediately
- Alert “networks” to find contacts within the client’s vicinity to act as first responders

Careful Considerations

- Thorough feasibility study required before introducing technology-based devices
- Logistical considerations for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed
- Ensuring efficacy of applications and appropriate beta-testing
- Appropriate promotion and marketing during device-launch
- Ensuring community input throughout device development and testing

Thank You to the DTES Street Market

This project would not have been possible without the help of those who participated in the consultations from the DTES street market. Verbal consent has been provided for the following photos to be displayed but these images are for illustration purposes only and do not represent the participants in the study.

Thanks.

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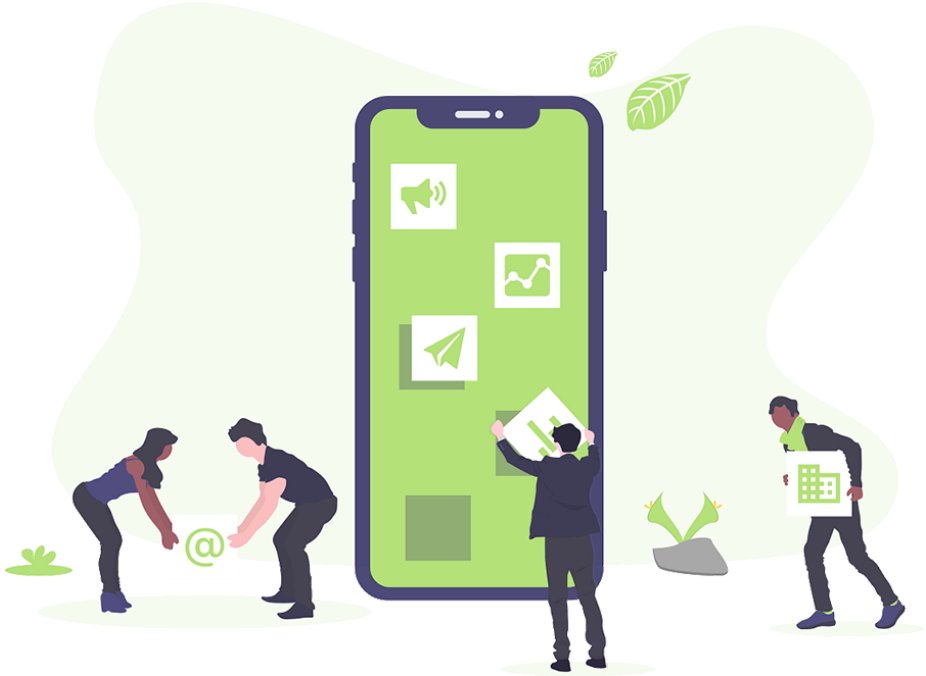
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