

Health Problems of Street Youth

....from research to action

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Research on Health of Montreal Street Youth

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1995- 2005 Montreal Street Youth Cohort

Risk behaviours and related health problems

- infectious diseases (HIV, Hepatitis A/B/C, STIs)
- addiction problems
- mental health problems
- mortality

1998-2007 Qualitative studies 1998-2007

- Initiation into injection
- Drug sharing practices
- Health care needs
- Contraception and pregnancy concerns

Collaborating Community Organisations

❖ Shelters

Abri de l'espoir
Accueil Bonneau
Auberge Madeleine
Chez Doris
En marge 12-17
La Maison Marguerite
Le Bunker
L'Invitée
Passage
Refuge des jeunes

❖ Day / Drop-in Centres

Chez Pops
Dîners St-Louis de Gonzague
Spectre de rue

❖ Mobile Units

L'Anonyme
Le Bon Dieu dans la rue

❖ Organisations with an outreach component

Pact de Rue
Stella
Travail de milieu jeunesse Sud-Ouest (TMJSO)
Projet d'intervention auprès des mineur(e)s
prostitué(e)s (PIAMP)
Séro-Zéro
Pic-Atouts

❖ Détoxification / rehabilitation centres

Alternative Jeunesse
Alternative Adulte

Sexual Behaviours

- ❖ **Early age at first sexual relation**
- ❖ **Multiple at-risk sex partners and high risk sexual activities (often under the influence)**

	♀	♂
❖ History of sexual abuse :	63%	25%
❖ Homosexual activities :	33%	15%
❖ Survival sex :	38%	19%

Alcohol and Drug Use Behaviors

	Daily
❖ Alcohol	9 %
❖ Pot / Hash	31 %
❖ Heroin	5 %
❖ Acid / PCP	5 %
❖ Cocaine / Crack	4 %

⇒ 14% of youth are concerned with their **alcohol** consumption

⇒ 42% of youth are concerned with their **drug** consumption

Injection Drug Use Among Street Youth

Prevalence 53 %

Average Age : 16,8 yrs

Incidence

14 – 18 yrs 22,7 / 100 p year

19 – 24 yrs 8,2 / 100 p year

Predictors of initiation

- ❖ Use of 4 types of drugs
- ❖ Daily alcohol use
- ❖ Homelessness
- ❖ History of rape
- ❖ Involvement in survival sex

Health Problems of Street Youth



❖ Infections

	Non-IDU	IDU
Hepatitis C	1,0 %	36,0 %
Hepatitis B	3,0 %	16,0 %
VIH	0,6 %	2,3 %

❖ Drug Overdoses

Prevalence	39 %
Suicide Attempt	18 %

Psychological suffering among street youth

❖ **Moderate / severe depression*** **37%**

❖ **Suicide attempts** **39%**

⇒ **Mortality rate 11 times higher than among youth the same age**
suicides
overdoses

What can be done to decrease mortality and morbidity among youth?

Hepatitis B Outreach Project 1997

- ❖ **over 1000 youth vaccinated; return rates: 80%**
- ❖ **many requests for health information and referrals**

Street Youth Focus Groups 1998

- **Health care problems:**
 - **alcohol, mental health, drug use, violence**
- **Barriers:**
 - **medical cards, personal barriers, attitudes of medical professionals**
- **Solutions**

What can be done to decrease mortality and morbidity? Youths' Solutions

Create a health service « for them »

- ❖ barrier-free, easy access
- ❖ fixed site and out-reach services
- ❖ respond to *youth's* concerns; non-judgemental, "holistic" services
- ❖ provide continuity of care: COs– youth protection – medical – judicial



What can be done to decrease mortality and morbidity? Youths' Solutions

❖ **Optimise “connectedness”**

- Family mediation
- Mentorship

❖ **Promote “self realization”**

- Adapted schooling
- Work training and insertion
- Artistic opportunities

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Task Force 1998 : Montreal Public Health and Partners: « Le Défi de l'Accès »

9 recommendations:

- decrease risks while in the streets
- improve opportunities to leave the streets
- prevention before the streets

2001: Funding: Federal: IPAC; Provincial: MSSS

1. development of the street youth health team
2. increased funding for street worker coverage and community organizations
3. training in suicide prevention, mental health and addictions

Health Team

❖ Fixed site

- Welcome, information, references
- Shower, clothes
- Telephone, computer
- Nursing/ Medical consultations

❖ Mobile “outreach” services

- Health promotion and prevention
- Links to services

❖ Multidisciplinary team

- Receptionist, peer helpers
- Nurses, social worker
- Psychologist
- Doctors, dentists, psychiatrists



Health Team ... challenges that remain

- ❖ **Improve access to adequate housing**
 - safe, clean and affordable
 - supportive / transitional apartments
 - respite care for youth
- ❖ **Increase access to mental health and addiction services**

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