Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Science

of

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“Including People Who Use Drugs in the Development and Delivery of Harm Reduction Programs, Services, and Drug Policy: A Scoping Review of the Literature”

Social Dimensions of Health

Tuesday April 20, 2021
11:00am PDT
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Bernie Pauly, School of Nursing, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
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Dr. Christopher Lalonde, Department of Psychology, UVic

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Abstract

**Background:** People who use drugs (PWUD) are disproportionately burdened by rates of HIV and Hepatitis C, more likely to experience stigma, social exclusion, and as a result, have poorer health outcomes. There is evidence that including PWUD in the development and delivery of harm reduction programs, services, and drug policy ensures such initiatives addresses their needs most effectively. To mitigate these inequities in health, people with lived experience of drug use are, and should be, included in decisions that affect them. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to present the findings of a scoping review of the peer-reviewed literature examining the involvement of people who use drugs (PWUD) in the development and delivery of harm reduction programs, services, and drug policy.

**Methods:** Scoping reviews represent an increasingly popular method used to review the literature of a particular topic. It is a process of summarizing, or ‘mapping’, a range of evidence in order to convey the breadth and depth of a particular field. This scoping review implemented a search strategy focused on three categories: search terms that describe ‘peer engagement’, search terms that describe ‘substance use’ and finally search terms that describe ‘harm reduction programs/services/policy’. Searches of five academic electronic databases were conducted. Peer reviewed literature published between 2010 and 2020 that discussed the involvement of PWUD in the development and/or delivery of harm reduction programs, services, or drug policy was included in the scoping review.

**Results:** The search strategy produced a total of 1902 references. After duplicates were removed, thirty-two references met the inclusion criteria and were included for analysis. This scoping review identified five characteristics from each study: 1) type of study, 2) location of study, 3) year of publication, 4) type of engagement/participation, and 5) peer roles.

**Conclusion:** One critical finding of this scoping review is the highest level of participation among PWUD was achieved when drug-user organizations were involved.

**Keywords:** Scoping review, Peer engagement, People who use drugs, Harm reduction, Health equity, Social inclusion.