The Province of BC and the BC Centre on Substance Use introduced Risk Mitigation Guidance (RMG) on March 26, 2020 in response to the dual public health emergencies of COVID-19 and drug poisoning deaths. The RMG provides clinical guidance on how to prescribe pharmaceutical alternatives and alcohol withdrawal medications to people who are likely to experience a drug poisoning and withdrawal symptoms related to opioid, stimulant, benzodiazepine, and alcohol use.

**The contaminated illicit drug supply is the primary contributor to illicit drug toxicity deaths in BC.**

Of the 12,207 people dispensed RMG medications:
- 58% received opioids,
- 17% received stimulants,
- 13% received benzodiazepines,
- 24% received alcohol withdrawal management medications.

- 94% of RMG medications were dispensed daily.
- 91% receiving RMG opioid medications were dispensed opioid agonist therapy (OAT) in the 30 days prior to or within 7 days after receiving first RMG dispensation.
- In 1.9% of illicit drug toxicity deaths hydromorphone was detected with no fentanyl or fentanyl analogues.
- There were no illicit drug toxicity deaths where hydromorphone was the only substance detected in post-mortem toxicology.*

**Number of New RMG Clients by Month**

**Demographics of People Receiving RMG Medications**

**Age**
- 15-19: 1.8%
- 20-29: 18.6%
- 30-39: 30%
- 40-49: 23.2%
- 50-59: 17.2%
- 60+: 9.2%

**Sex**
- 62% of people who received RMG medications were male.

**Health Authority**
- Interior Health: 14.7%
- Fraser Health: 22.9%
- Vancouver Coastal Health: 35.4%
- Island Health: 20.6%
- Northern Health: 6.2%

* Hydromorphone was detected with an average of seven other substances, often including cocaine, alcohol, morphine, etizolam, and fluaprazolam. BC Coroner Service data from March 27, 2020 - May 31, 2021.

All inferences, opinions, and conclusions drawn in this infographic are those of the authors, and do not reflect the opinions or policies of the Data Stewards.

Citation: PharmaNet (Pharma) (prescription drugs dispensed from community pharmacies, includes medications covered by public and private insurance plans)

Last updated: February 22, 2022