OVERDOSE IN PLAIN SIGHT

Deploying naloxone access and community-led rapid response

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MAST-RU
MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL, SUBSTANCE USE AND TOBACCO RESEARCH UNIT

SANPUD
South African Network of People Who Use Drugs

AGENDA OVERVIEW

01 Nadine Harker -SA MRC MAST-RU

02 Kalvanya Padayachee - SANAC

03 Dr. Andrew Scheibe - TB HIV Care

04 **Lekgaba Reginald Kgoedi**

05 Question and Answer

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STRUCTURE

Deploying Overdose Interventions: Naloxone Access and Community-Led Rapid Response

Focus on the work that the PWUD community has done to train peers as first responders for overdose incidents within the community. This will include the training that has been carried out thus far as well as the packs that have been handed out into the community.

AGENDA OVERVIEW

01 **Who is SANPUD?**

02 **SANPUD highlight community-based distribution models**

03 **Examine rapid response strategies and challenges**

04 **Propose scalable solutions for South African contexts**

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South African Network of People Who Use Drugs

WHO IS SANPUD

- SANPUD, the South African Network of People Who Use Drugs, is a peer-led advocacy organisation promoting rights-based drug policies and harm reduction in South Africa.

- SANPUD, support harm reduction strategies that include preventing overdose, offering symptomatic care during withdrawal, and reducing drug-related harm overall.

- Through these initiatives, SANPUD has strengthened the capacity of peer educators and partners, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to prevent overdoses and save lives.

- Recognizing the urgent need to address opioid overdoses, SANPUD initiated a grassroots naloxone distribution model to empower communities most affected.

HIGHLIGHT COMMUNITY-BASED DISTRIBUTION MODELS

Institution involved	Number of Participants	Target Audience	Outcome
Youth RISE & SANPUD	+40	People who inject drugs, their families, and community members	• Increased awareness and preparedness • Creation of community "champions" for overdose response • Naloxone Kit used during training • Established CAG also in various Provinces
TB HIV Care's Drop-in Centre	14 WC CoC	People who inject drugs, their families, and community members	
Tsohang Youth Project and SANPUD	+ 5 GP ED	PWUD Community Led Monitors	
TBHIV Care, SANPUD	+150 KZN (Ethekwini)	People who inject drugs, their families, and community members	

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EXAMINE RAPID RESPONSE STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

- Training lay responders to administer naloxone before medical help arrives
- Emphasis on recognizing overdose symptoms and acting quickly
- Need for mobile outreach teams and peer-led interventions, as many overdoses happen in informal spaces (e.g. Hotspots areas, streets, abandoned buildings, shebeens, and hostels)
- Integration with harm reduction services (e.g.,needle exchange, OST, Drug Consumption Room)

EXAMINE RAPID RESPONSE STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

- **Challenges:**
- **Barriers to healthcare access:** Peer-led interventions build **trust**, as peers share lived experience and can reduce fear of judgment.
- **Time-critical nature of overdoses:** We need to **train peers, family, and community members to recognize and respond** quickly using naloxone, reducing deaths before emergency services arrive.
- **Lack of funding for Peer networks:** Resources required for as PWUD are more likely to accept information, naloxone kits, and safe-use advice from fellow peers than from outsiders.
- **Lack of Holistic harm reduction and linkage to care:** Harm Reduction only implemented in few Provinces, Most District do not have clean needles/syringes and safer smoking kits.

PROPOSED SCALABLE SOLUTIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

- Advocate for policy change to allow over-the-counter naloxone
- Expand training programs to include more community members
- Partner with PWUD Sector, peer networks, DsD, DoH, clinics, and NGOs working on substance use
- Pilot mobile overdose response units in high-risk areas
- Collect and publish overdose data to guide interventions

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OUR CALL FOR ACTION

- Empower communities with knowledge and tools
- Push for legal reform and funding
- Review current Harm Reduction national framework and develop overdose prevention and response Policy
- **Focus on Street-Based Populations** Trainings targeted high-risk groups, especially those injecting heroin and living on the streets, where overdose risk is highest.
- Decriminalize prescription requirements **to expand naloxone access** as non-prescription medication, enable community-based distribution, and support peer-led response training.
- Replicate integrated OST and NSP services in other provinces beyond Tshwane.
- Advocate for **harm reduction funding**—close the massive funding gap and embed sustainable domestic support for drug-user-centered services.

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OUR CALL FOR ACTION

SANPUD's model is a powerful example of how **community empowerment, peer leadership, and strategic partnerships** can overcome systemic barriers to overdose prevention. It's a blueprint for scaling harm reduction in South Africa and beyond.

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