

## PEER EDUCATION STRATEGIES FOR OVERDOSE PREVENTION

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**Introduction and Aims:** In 2015 WA has seen an increasing upward trend in ambulance callouts to opioid overdose. Training and developing peer educators is an effective strategy to engage this 'hard to reach' group for overdose prevention education to reduce the rate of opioid fatalities and morbidity.

**Design and Methods:** In 2011, the Western Australian Substance Users' Association (WASUA), working with the Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO), developed and implemented the Overdose Prevention and Management project (OPAM), a peer-based project which trains opioid users to provide education to peers on opioid overdose, blood-borne viruses and other harm-reduction strategies. Data collected by peer educators provided useful insights into current drug use trends and health concerns. Based on the success of the OPAM project, the Peer Naloxone Project, commenced in January 2013.

**Results:** During the period of June 2011 to December 2014, OPAM has trained 82 participants, collected over 400 diaries, recording 3358 peer education interactions, provided a total of 820 education and mentoring sessions, with over 50 reports of successful overdose reversal.

The WA Peer Naloxone Project has trained 202 participants, with 135 participants prescribed naloxone. To date there has been over 60 anecdotal reports of successful overdose reversal using naloxone and/or Basic Life Support skills.

**Conclusions:** These peer-based projects highlight the strengths of a peer-based approach. Participant testimonials, attest to the value and empowerment of peer education models in the AOD sector.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** *The Overdose Prevention and Management Project is funded by the Drug and Alcohol Office. No other funding sources were used for this project.*