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Needs Assessment: Northeast Philly Opioid Epidemic

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Needs Assessment: Northeast Philly Opioid Epidemic

Davis Witt, MS, BS, Christopher Chambers, MD*

Introduction: Philadelphia has the 3rd highest rate of opioid-related overdoses in the nation. This crisis is worsening in Northeast Philadelphia and the Department of Public Health lacks necessary information to intervene in an informed manner.

Objective: This study aims to better understand the crisis in this community and to provide key information to guide future harm reduction interventions in the Northeast Philadelphia region.

Methods: Using a designed discussion guide, qualitative interviews were completed with key stakeholders and community members. Information regarding personal experiences and opinions about the epidemic was gathered and interviews were analyzed using narrative analysis. In addition, needle counts were completed in public spaces. These counts were used to measure the free needle burden in this community. The findings of this study will be reported to the Department of Public Health.

Results: Community member and stakeholder interviews produced a spectrum of opinions surrounding this issue. Major themes include the need for better access to needle exchange services and the idea that the harm reduction needed in this community differs from what would be accepted by its community members. The needle counts reveal that there is not a serious burden in the community, suggesting little need for further needle disposal kiosks in the area.

Conclusion: In conclusion, future interventions should be centered around increasing needle exchange services and improving access and visibility of treatment centers in this community.

Furthermore, further action should be taken to address the stigma of substance abuse in this community.