North America's First Supervised Injection Site Now Offering Cannabis for Recovery

The Canadian harm reduction center will provide medical marijuana at little to no cost as a safer alternative to opioids.

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North America's first legal supervised injection site, located in Vancouver, British Columbia, is now set to become the country's first "full-time cannabis harm reduction center," The Fix reports.

Starting this month, The High Hopes Foundation will begin providing medical marijuana at little to no cost for patients in recovery as a safer alternative to opioids. Leaders of the organization say the program, which offers either cannabis or cannabidiol (CBD) oils (a non-psychotropic component of marijuana often consumed for pain) to people trying to wean off drugs like heroin and prescription painkillers, is a realistic approach to attacking one of the world's most debilitating addictions.

Established last year, the site's cannabis program started out by collecting cannabis donations from registered patients or dispensaries that were legally allowed to sell the products. But now, that marijuana has been legalized in Canada, High Hopes should be able to expand its program.

The underlying idea behind the pro-pot intervention is to give people with substance use disorders an alternative to using potentially dangerous street drugs. Medical marijuana can also help reduce pain and withdrawal symptoms for patients in recovery. In addition to providing free or low-cost cannabis, the center will offer free fentanyl testing strips and naloxone training to those who need it.

"What we are doing is not fully legal," noted Sarah Blyth, president of High Hopes in a recent interview about the initiative, "but we see it helps, and we are desperate to help people. Watching people die isn't easy."

In 2017, nearly 4,000 Canadians died of an opioid overdose. Nearly 1,400 of those overdoses occurred in British Columbia.

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