



Title: *Harm Reduction at Prevention Point*

Student Interns: *Joseph Beaty, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania; Christopher Garrick, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University*

Academic Preceptors: *Hillary Bogner, MD, MSCE, Perelman School of Medicine; Maria Hervada-Page, MSS, Sidney Kimmel Medical College; Christopher Renjilian, MD, Perelman School of Medicine*

Community Preceptors: *Ben Cocchiaro, MD, MPH, Prevention Point; Margaret Lowenstein, MD, MSHP, Perelman School of Medicine*

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Prevention Point Philadelphia is a harm reduction organization located in Kensington, Philadelphia. It was started in 1991 as an outgrowth of Philadelphia's chapter of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). This illegal, grass-roots syringe service aimed to reduce HIV transmission among people who inject drugs. In 1992, mayor Ed Rendell overrode Pennsylvania State law and issued an executive order legalizing possession of syringes. Since then, Prevention Point has expanded their services to include medical case management, medication-assisted treatment of substance use disorders, naloxone (Narcan) distribution, overdose prevention education, mail services, bathroom services, housing, and meals.

BACKGROUND

- Harm reduction seeks to reduce adverse health, social, and economic consequences of illicit drug use without the expectation of sobriety.¹
- The CDC estimated that there were 100,306 drug overdose deaths between April 2020 and 2021, a 28.5% increase from the prior year.²
- 75,673 of these deaths were from opiates.²
- Much of this increase in mortality can be attributed to fentanyl in the drug supply.³
- In the first 6 months of 2021, there were a total of 639 overdoses in the city of Philadelphia.⁴
- 81% of the 2020 overdose deaths in Philadelphia included Fentanyl.⁴



Photography by: Joseph V. Labolito
Photo taken from: <https://news.temple.edu/news/2020-09-30/how-can-we-best-communicate-public-health-concerns-vulnerable-populations>

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

- Interns in the STEP program collaborated with community members to address obstacles on their recovery from opioid use disorders.
- Interns in the Needle Exchange Program distributed resources and connected community members to Prevention Point services that met their immediate needs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES, & JOYS

- Prevention Point's limited resources often made meeting participants' specific needs difficult—we learned the importance of reaching out to and building relationships with outside community organizations to better serve our participants.
- We also were reminded of the importance of mindfulness in addiction medicine in order to promote participant autonomy when considering their recovery journey.



Healing Begins Through Connection (detail) by SWOON. Photo by Steve Weinik.
Photo taken from: <https://www.muralarts.org/artworks/healing-begins-through-connection/>

REFLECTION

- We spent our summer at Prevention Point studying and practicing the principles of harm reduction.
- Integrated into Prevention Point's care model is the recognition that no health professional can ever force a patient to "get better;" patients must feel empowered to define what "better" means to them.
- Through our conversations with participants, we learned to ask how we can fit the specific needs of each patient, rather than confining a patient to a rigid care model that doesn't work for them.