

# Addiction Treatment and Stable Housing Among a Cohort of Injection Drug Users

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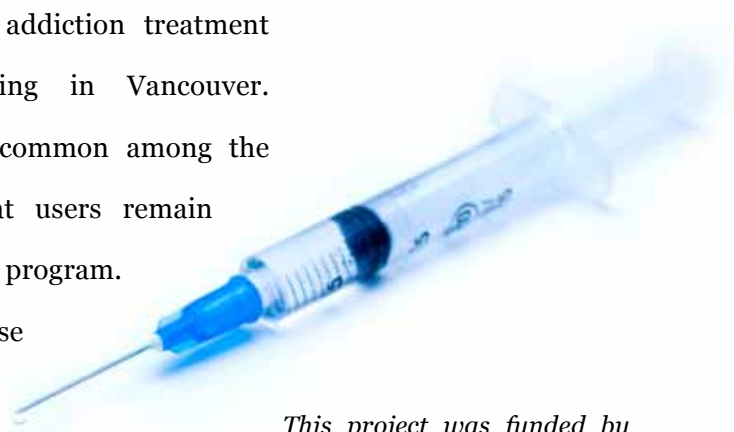
## What you need to know

Addiction is a major factor in becoming and remaining homeless. Current addiction treatment programs require abstinence for ongoing enrolment. Many homeless people require more creative approaches to deal with their addictions.

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## What is this research about?

The research aims to find out whether or not addiction treatment programs help homeless people find housing in Vancouver. Previous research has shown that substance use is common among the homeless and most treatment programs expect that users remain abstinent from their drug of choice to remain in the program. This limits the number of people who can access these services, because for many homeless people, abstinence is not an option. Therefore, a large percentage of people remain homeless.



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**KEYWORDS**  
*injection drug users, addiction  
treatment, stable housing, Vancouver*

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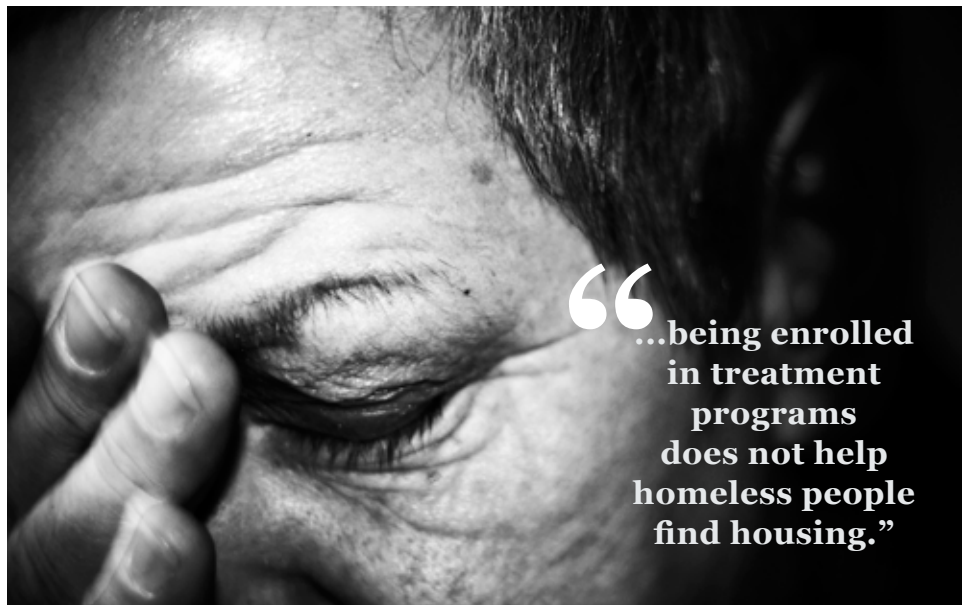
**ARTICLE SOURCE**  
*Addiction Treatment and Stable  
Housing among a Cohort of Injection  
Drug Users was published in  
PLoS ONE, Volume 5, Issue 7 in 2010.*

## What did the researchers find?

The research has shown that being enrolled in treatment programs does not help homeless people find housing.



Being in treatment programs may indicate less stability in their lives, suggesting that homeless people have other more important issues to deal with such as food and basic shelter. The researchers found that homeless people who were either employed or in relationships had a better chance of finding housing than homeless people who were in treatment programs. The researchers also point out that there needs to be both housing plans, along with treatment programs, to help homeless people find housing.



“...being enrolled in treatment programs does not help homeless people find housing.”

## What did the researchers do?

The researchers from The Vancouver Injection Drug Users Study (VIDUS) studied the negative effect substance use has on attaining housing in Vancouver, Canada. 992 participants were interviewed and answered questionnaires between

December 2005 and May 2006. Participants were then asked to respond to at least two of eight follow up questionnaires leading up to April 2010 to see whether or not treatment programs helped to find housing.

## HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

A mix of both supportive housing strategies and addiction treatment programs is needed, in Vancouver, to address the obstacles faced by many homeless people in attaining housing. Creative approaches to addiction therapy that do not consider abstinence to be the ultimate goal are necessary as abstinence does not work for everyone suffering from addiction.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Anita Palepu** is a Full Professor, Division of Internal Medicine, UBC. Her research falls under the broad umbrella of urban health research with particular interest in vulnerable populations such as drug users, HIV-infected persons, and homeless persons.