

# How a powdered fentanyl program has improved a client's quality of life

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I've tried titrated injectable opioid therapies and none of them worked, so when they came out with the powdered fentanyl program, I thought I'd give it a try. So far it seems to be working pretty good. I've been on it for about 2 months.

You can come to SAFER [Safer Alternatives for Emergency Response program] up to 4 times a day. Sometimes I come a couple of times, sometimes all 4. Night is the only time where I'm finding I'm using outside of the program. They close at 4:00 pm and fentanyl's not a long-acting

I have more structure. There isn't much reliability in trying to survive off street dope. It's a lot easier to have a prescription, come in when I want, and I know it's safe. Well, not safe. But safer. The issue is the quality of what I'm getting on the street. You never know what they put in it. There's lots of benzos in the fentanyl these days. People are blacking out and stuff like that. Here, I know exactly how much I'm getting and I know it's made by a pharmacy, not by someone I don't know.

and Vancouver. Back home it's pretty bad, but over here people are dying every day. I've had quite a few friends die. — SAFER client

**As told to Andreas Laupacis MD MSc**  
Deputy editor, *CMAJ*

## Reference

1. Krishnan M. Drug users can now legally buy pure fentanyl for dirt cheap in Vancouver. *Vice.com*. 2022 Apr. 11. Available: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/4awm9d/vancouver-fentanyl-portland-hotel-society> (accessed 2022 Apr. 27).

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Consent has been given for this perspective to be shared.

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## I have more structure. There isn't much reliability in trying to survive off street dope... [and] you never know what they put in it.

drug. I'm also on a pretty high dose of methadone, but it doesn't last as long as it is supposed to. I take it at 8:00 in the morning and by 5:00 pm it's already worn off, so I usually have to buy something before bed. I'm hoping that once SAFER gets the buying program started, I'll be able to buy something for nighttime and then I won't have to rely on the street stuff. They'll be selling points (0.1 g) for \$10 apiece for home use<sup>1</sup> so I'll have something for when they close.

I know the nurses and doctors pretty well here. I'm pretty open with them — I tell them everything I want them to know. They are all addiction-based doctors and nurses, so they have a lot of experience dealing with people who are using drugs. They don't attach the stigma to it too much.

SAFER is what everybody's been waiting for. I didn't think I'd see it in my lifetime. With the whole fentanyl crisis, people are dying everywhere, all over the country, especially in British Columbia