



McGill

Department of  
Epidemiology, Biostatistics  
and Occupational Health

**EPIDEMIOLOGY SEMINAR SERIES**  
**Winter 2017**

**\*\*THE DEPARTMENT OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, BIostatISTICS AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, - SEMINAR SERIES IS A SELF-APPROVED GROUP LEARNING ACTIVITY (SECTION 1) AS DEFINED BY THE MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION PROGRAM OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA\*\***

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Research Scientist, British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

***Synchronized income assistance payments and drug-related harm:  
Using epidemiologic, experimental and mixed methods to explore the  
health impacts of policy change***

**Monday, 30 January 2017**  
**4:00 pm - 5:00 pm – McIntyre Medical Building**  
**3655 promenade Sir William Osler – Meakins – Rm 521**

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**SYNOPSIS:** The once monthly disbursement of income assistance, while seeking to alleviate the negative consequences of poverty, is also a key driver of severe and unintended health, social and economic harms related to illicit drug use. A growing body of research identifies significant and alarming escalations in drug use and related harm in the days surrounding synchronized income assistance payments. In response, we have initiated a randomized controlled trial of a structural intervention to modify the timing and frequency of assistance payments in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where a significant proportion of the population receives income assistance and uses illicit drugs. Experimental outcomes will be assessed alongside a nested qualitative parallel process evaluation to identify the impacts of as well as the social processes affected by the study intervention. This presentation will outline the experiment's epidemiologic rationale, study design, implementation challenges, preliminary results and the value of the nested qualitative evaluation. This research examines income assistance program design as a potentially important structural strategy to mitigate avoidable risk among socio-economically marginalized individuals.

**OBJECTIVES:** At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- 1) To learn about the public health impacts of social policy, specifically among vulnerable and marginalized people who use illicit drugs
- 2) To gain exposure to the complexities of conducting social and structural experiments
- 3) To improve knowledge of the potential to and advantages of combining multiple methods (epidemiologic, experimental and mixed) to assess a social problem

**BIO:** Lindsey Richardson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia and a Research Scientist with the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. She specializes in the quantitative, mixed-methods and experimental analysis of socio-economic marginalization and its health impacts among vulnerable populations. Lindsey holds masters and doctoral degrees in Sociology from the University of Oxford, where she was a Trudeau Foundation Scholar. She is currently supported by a Canadian Institutes of Health Research New Investigator Award and a Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Career Scholar Award.

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