

## Javiera Navarrete - University of Alberta

Project: *Exploring the role of pharmacy staff in the care of people who use drugs: patient, provider, and decision-maker perspectives.*

### Background:



The drug poisoning crisis affects individuals, families and communities across Canada. Despite substantial federal and provincial efforts, drug-related deaths continue to increase. Between January and November 2023, more than 1,800 Albertans died from drug overdose. Pharmacy assistants, technicians, and

pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare professionals with a broad scope of practice. They can potentially make essential contributions to the public health response to drug poisoning. However, little is known about their role in supporting public health efforts, including the current nature and extent of their engagement in initiatives (e.g. naloxone distribution, opioid agonist therapy dispensing) and the potential to expand their practice further to include delivery of new preventive, harm reduction, and treatment interventions. Moreover, little research has incorporated the viewpoints of other pharmacy staff, decision-makers, and people who use drugs (PWUD) concerning the role of pharmacy staff in this particular subject matter. This study addresses this gap by exploring perspectives

on pharmacy services for PWUD and the role of pharmacy staff.

In partnership with people with lived and living experiences of drug use and pharmacy staff caring for PWUD, this study aims to explore the pharmacy staff's role as public health agents in responding to the drug poisoning crisis and providing equity-oriented care for PWUD in a pharmacy setting. Qualitative interviews with PWUD, pharmacy staff, and decision-makers will explore the perspectives on pharmacy staff roles and PWUD experiences accessing pharmacy-based services. Expected outcomes include describing contextual and individual factors (e.g., sex, gender, stigma) shaping the experiences, perceptions, barriers, and facilitators existing to providing equity-oriented, high-quality care for PWUD at pharmacies. Partners, including the Inner City Wellness and Health Program advisory group, will be meaningfully engaged throughout the research process. Findings will be used to develop recommendations for advancing pharmacy education, practices, and policies to provide equity and high-quality pharmacy services for people who use drugs.

Increasing our knowledge about the pharmacy staff's role in caring for PWUD will help us make meaningful changes to strengthen pharmacy systems that meet the needs of all Albertans.

### **Bio**

*Javiera Navarrete (she/her) is a Ph.D. student in Public Health specializing in Health Services and Policy Research at the University of Alberta. She is supervised by Dr. Elaine Hyshka and is a trainee in the Inner City Health and Wellness Program. Javiera earned a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree in Chile and moved to Edmonton in 2018 to pursue graduate studies. In 2021, she completed an M.Sc. in Pharmacy Practice program at the University of Alberta, where she explored the role of community pharmacists in sexual and reproductive health. Her social interactions, experiences, and work have led her to develop a strong sense of community in Edmonton. Propelled by her interest in connecting her research to pressing public health issues affecting the community, Javiera started a Doctoral degree in public health with a focus on the role of pharmacy staff in the drug poisoning crisis. Outside of school, Javiera enjoys spending time outdoors and discovering new local coffee shops. She also volunteers with her dog, Luna, at Pets Assisting with Student Success (PAWSS), an animal therapy program at MacEwan University that aims to support the community's mental health and well-being.*