

The Cedar Project mHealth Study

A text message intervention for HIV prevention and treatment among young Indigenous people who use illicit drugs – successes and challenges to date

Kate Jongbloed, Margo Pearce, Sherri Pooyak, Lou Demerais, Vicky Thomas, Anton Friedman, Martin Schechter, Richard Lester, Patricia Spittal, For the Cedar Project Partnership



PROVIDENCE HEALTH CARE
Research Institute

The Cedar Project Partnership



Elder Earl Henderson (Cree, Métis)
Elder Violet Bozoki (Lheidli T'enneh)
Prince George Native Friendship Centre
Carrier Sekani Child & Family Services
Splatsin Secwepmc Nation
Adams Lake Indian Band

Neskonlith Indian Band
Positive Living North
Red Road Aboriginal AIDS Network
Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network
Vancouver Native Health Society
Central Interior Native Health
All Nations Hope

The Cedar Project Cohort

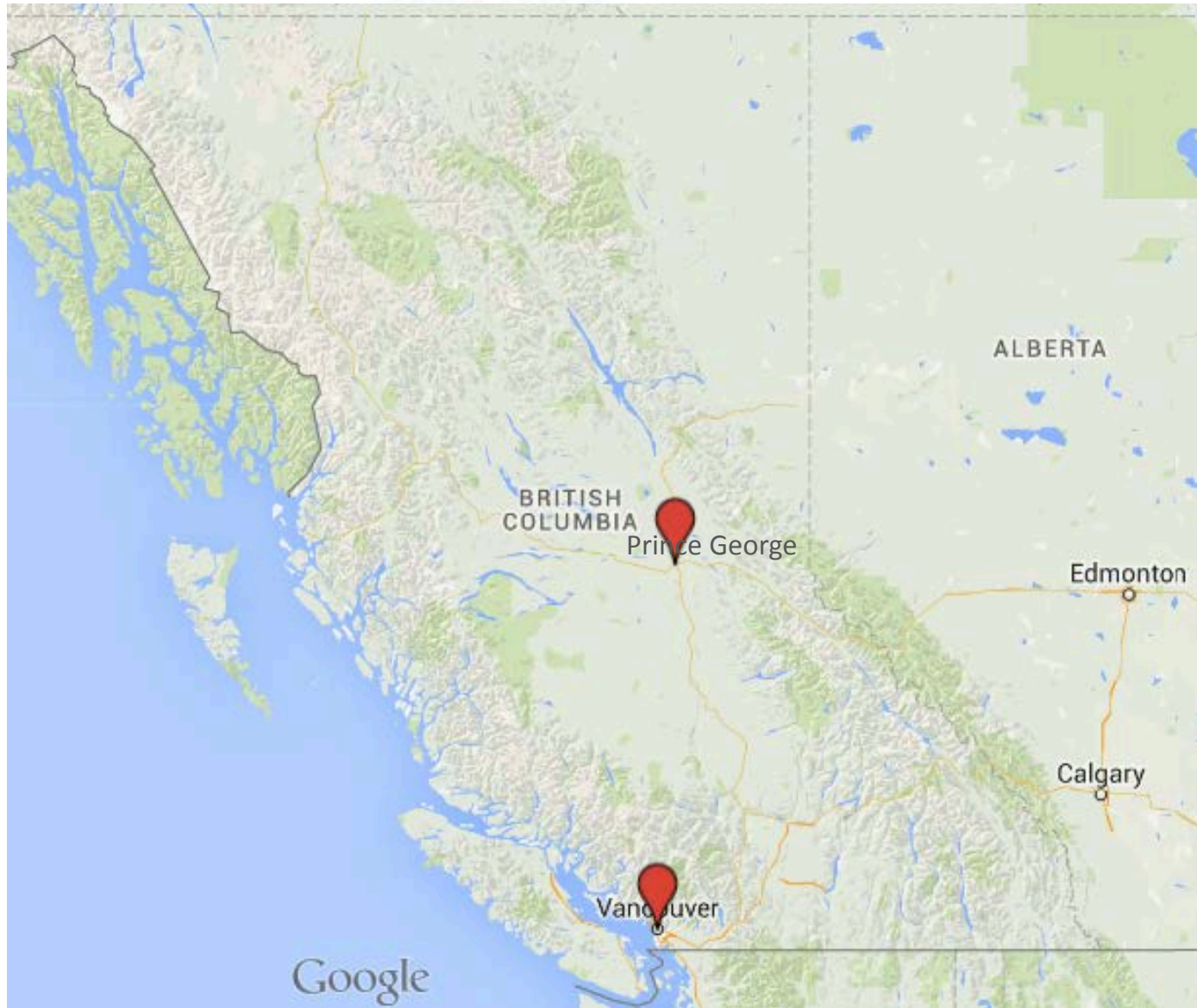
The Cedar Project is a community-based prospective cohort study of 14 to 30 year old Indigenous youth who use injection or non-injection drugs.

All participants self-identified as Indigenous and used illicit drugs, other than marijuana, in the month before enrolment (confirmed using saliva screens).

Initial recruitment occurred between 2003-2007. Reopened recruitment in 2011. Currently approximately 780 participants.

Indigenous interviewers administer follow-up questionnaires every six months. Trained nurses draw blood samples for HIV and HCV antibodies and provide pre- and post-test counselling.

The Cedar Project Study Sites



HIV among Indigenous young people

Indigenous people make up 3.4% of the Canadian population.

33% of HIV+ tests in Canada among Indigenous people (2009)

64% of HIV infections among Indigenous people due to injection drug use.

Young Indigenous people are disproportionately affected.

For those with HIV, Indigenous people 1/3 as likely to achieve viral suppression and 3x more likely to die of HIV.

4 of our participants have died of HIV-related causes, despite being under 40 and living in a province where health care and HIV medicine is free and readily available.



Led by

Dr. Richard Lester

Director, Neglected Global Diseases Initiative, UBC

Assistant Professor, Division of Infectious Disease, UBC

Executive Director of WelTel

The Cedar Project mHealth intervention



Phone + plan

Participants receive a cellular handset at the start of the study. They receive a monthly cellular plan that includes unlimited calling and texting within Canada.

How's it going?

Text check-ins

Each Monday a “how’s it going?” text message is automatically sent to participants via the WeTel mHealth platform. Participants have 48 hours to respond.



Support

Cedar case managers login within 24-48 hours to triage incoming texts. Participants who replied with a problem or need and those who did not reply get follow up and support.

Ask, don't tell: supportive messages

Ask, Don't Tell — Mobile Phones to Improve HIV Care

TO THE EDITOR: Almost all health care is voluntary: patients choose when to engage in care, when to take their medicine (if they choose to take it), and whether to return for follow-up visits. In human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and other chronic diseases, the benefits of medication adherence for the patient and public health are tremendous. Mobile health — the use of mobile devices such as cell phones to improve health outcomes and health care services

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Comment

Adherence to antiretroviral therapy: supervision or support?

Edward J Mills^a, , Richard Lester^b, Nathan Ford^{c, d}

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Study uncovers link in abuses

Researchers say survey shows connection between residential schools, continued mistreatment of women

ALLAN MAKI CALGARY

Young aboriginal women in B.C. are more likely to be victims of violence if they were sexually abused as children or had a parent who attended a residential school, a landmark study has found.

Researchers for a survey called the Cedar Project say their study to be released on Friday is the first in Canada to show a statistical connection between continued abuse and the residential schools. (B.C. had 22 of them, the most of any Canadian province.)

The Cedar Project interviewed 259 women, ages 14 to 30, several times over seven years. The report says they were “nearly 10 times more likely to be sexually assaulted later in life if they had a history of childhood sexual abuse.” It said the women were also at a high risk if at least one of their parents had spent time at a residential school.

Until the late 20th century, native children were taken from their families and placed in residential schools, where many were beaten and sexually abused. At least 3,000 children died at the schools. Some survivors suffering from the effects of the



Cedar Project participant Christina Tom, who – despite being HIV positive – considers herself ‘one of the lucky ones,’ is seen at the Kamloops, B.C., powwow grounds on Wednesday. JEFF BASSETT FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Discussion

Innovative, culturally-safe interventions that address barriers to HIV prevention and treatment while supporting the strength of young Indigenous people who use drugs are urgently needed.

Mobile phone-based interventions present a tremendous opportunity to connect young Indigenous people who use drugs to services and support.