## IMPACT OF HEALTH SYSTEM ENGAGEMENT ON THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS: **A REALIST REVIEW**

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Background	Positive Outcomes		Mechansim	Context	Mechansim	Nega Outco	ative omes
Context							
People who use drugs (PWUD) choose to get involved in health system improvement (advocacy, service planning, research, front line work) for a variety of reasons.		Validation	Fair compensation	Material Needs	Unfair Compensation	Unmet needs (i.e. proper housing and food)	
Community-level benefits of meaningful health system engagement are well established; however, the individual-level health impacts on PWUD are less explored. We aimed to uncover how, why, and under what circumstances positive and negative health outcomes occur during health system engagement by PWUD.	Increased employment opportunities	Increased engagement	Accessibility	Oppressive Structures	Undercompensated	Stress Disempowering	Worsening
Objective		Fulfilment in role	Occupational Supports	Barriers to	Inaccessibility	Hinders participation	mental health
<ol> <li>Explore how engagement in healthcare outside of the patient-provider relationship (e.g. through health system planning, delivery, advocacy, and research) influences the health and well-being of PWUD.</li> </ol>	Improved	Risk Reduction	Social Connections	Health system engagement	Witnessing losses	Burnout Unclear roles	
2) Develop best practice recommendations for engaging PWUDs, to better their health and	health	Self-efficacy	Learning	Social Environment	Occupational Hazards	Psychological	$\rightarrow$
well-being and minimize negative impacts through facilitating changes within the health system.		Motivated to	Identity Change	Occupational	Social connections	harms Blurred boundaries between work and	
Design	Safer substance Use	particpate	Challenge stigma Sense of Responsibility	Environment		personal spheres (i.e. work 24/7)	Unsafe substance
		Increased Self-Esteem		Altruism and Caring	Stigma and Discrimination	Barriers	use
A realist review was conducted to identify mechanisms (i.e., intermediary processes) to explain how programs within a context (i.e., environment or pre-existing state) work or fail to produce the expected outcome of health.		Sense of purpose	Desire to help others	Intergeneration/ Colonial Trauma	Diminishes over time	Lack of respect Decreased motivation in	
After the initial development of the program theory — an initial model of how health engagement is thought to achieve its impacts — articles from the literature focusing on		Positive identity change	Cultural safety/Indigenizing		Lack of Cultural Safety	participation Isolation	

health systems engagement and the well-being of PWUD were gathered and data abstracted into contexts (C), mechanisms (M), and outcomes (O).

The CMOs were categorized into key themes. The initial program theory was revised iteratively through consultation with clinical and academic content experts and a traditional knowledge keeper. PWUD with lived experiences of health system engagement contributed to all stages of this review.

Fig 1. An overview of the current revised program theory. Here, the CMOs originate within the center, emanating towards the left and right sides. Within a context, mechanisms can lead to certain

consequences, further leading to broader outcomes such as increased engagement or mental health problems.

Findings	Conclusions
85 research articles and five theories were included in the emerging program theory. Key themes overlap with the socio-ecological framework and include the value of learning opportunities, altruism and caring, risk of psychological harm, benefit of peer support, and need for social connection, accessibility, compensation, and a stigma-free environment.	The macro-meso-micro level context exerts an influence on the engagement process and can create health or harm. Healthy engagement for PWUD depends on social, structural, and cultural support, clear role definition, and an anti-oppressive engagement environment that fosters personal development.
Recommendations for healthy engagement include fair compensation, opportunities for development, clear role definition and expectations, and access to psychological and cultural supports.	





