

Study paints complex health portrait of single-room occupancy hotel tenants in Downtown Eastside

August 9 2013

A new study is revealing the multiple health concerns faced by an estimated 3,000 tenants in single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

The results of the study aim to better inform the provision of health care and housing among an often-overlooked segment of the population.

Due to their affordability, SROs are often the only alternative to homelessness for low-income individuals in Vancouver and other major cities. Some SROs are substandard and many tenants suffer from [substance dependence](#), mental illness and infectious diseases.

The study, published today in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, shows that two-thirds of SRO tenants surveyed were previously homeless and suffered from an average of three illnesses at the same time.

Ninety-five per cent had substance dependence and almost two-thirds were involved in injection drug use. Nearly half of the participants suffered from psychosis, and nearly half had a [neurological disorder](#). Eighteen per cent of the residents surveyed were HIV-positive and 70 per cent had been exposed to Hepatitis C.

"Even with the great progress that has been made in decreasing [overdose deaths](#) through the establishment of InSite, the supervised injection site,

the death rate in our participants was still nearly five times greater than in the general population," says Dr. William Honer, Professor and Head of the UBC Department of Psychiatry and senior author of the study.

"Compared with homelessness, there has been relatively little research into the magnitude of the health problems experienced by people living in marginal housing," says Honer.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Study paints complex health portrait of single-room occupancy hotel tenants in Downtown Eastside (2013, August 9) retrieved 25 February 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-complex-health-portrait-single-room-occupancy.html>

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