Implementing Harm Reduction Vending Machines in a California Veterans Affairs Syringe Services Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presenting Author</th>
<th>Co-Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tessa Rife-Pennington, PharmD, BCGP  
*Pronouns: she/her/hers*  
Harm Reduction Coordinator  
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System  
Assistant Clinical Professor, Volunteer  
University of California, San Francisco, School of Pharmacy | Donna Dare, PharmD, FCSHP  
Chief, Pharmacy Service  
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System  
To-Nga Huynh, PharmD  
Associate Chief, Quality, Safety, & Value, Pharmacy Service  
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System |
Disclosures

• The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States government.

• The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

• This work is funded by the National VA Pain Management, Opioid Safety, Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMOP), National VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (OMHSP), and the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System.
Program Beginnings

2019-2020
• Overdose education and naloxone pilot for Veterans in supportive housing¹
  • Feedback: concern for fentanyl in drug supply, increasing overdoses

2020
• Fentanyl test kit pilot for substance treatment program²
  • Feedback: expand access and supply types, bring to community

2021-2022
• Harm reduction kit pilot for Veterans in supportive housing³
  • Feedback: expand types of supplies available (e.g., lotion, mouthwash)
  • Challenges: bringing kits to housing site visits; Veterans may not want to or be available to engage; expanding reach beyond San Francisco
Evidence for Harm Reduction Vending Machines

Injection Equipment
- ↑ access sterile syringes
- ↓ syringe sharing
- Likely cost efficient, low staffing requirements
- No ↑ unsafe disposal of used equipment, drug use, vandalism

During COVID-19
- ↑ SSP engagement and supply distribution
- ↓ overdose deaths and hepatitis C virus incidence

Additional Benefits
- ↑ anonymity, acceptance, accessibility, convenience, access outside business hours
- ↓ stigma, geographic, financial barriers
Implementation Timeline

November - December 2021
First pitch for VA funding - not approved

January - April 2022
Met with community-based organizations
Conducted market research
Second pitch for VA funding - approved
Initial stakeholder meetings

May - July 2022
Contracting process for first 8 machines
Vendor registered at SAM.gov | Home
Vendor added to facility vendor file
Implementation Timeline, continued

- **August 2022**
  - Designed vending machine graphics wrap and plan-o-gram

- **September - November 2022**
  - Contracting process for 7 additional machines
  - First order delivered to VA warehouse
  - Machines tagged by Engineering

- **December - April 2023**
  - Vending machines delivered to VA clinics and housing sites
Implementation Timeline, continued

**April - May 2023**
- Initial machine set-up
- 7 additional machines delivered to VA warehouse
- Machines tagged by Engineering
- Machines delivered to VA clinics
- Supply vendors added to facility vendor file
- First purchase orders of supplies
- Supply sorting, packing, shipping

**June - October 2023**
- Machine setup, maintenance, stocking
- 10 machines live in August
- 4 machines live in September
- Registration events
- Supply sorting, packing, shipping
Placement

2 San Francisco VA Medical Center
- Opioid Treatment Program Clinic
- Mental Health Clinic

7 community-based outpatient clinics
- Eureka
- Ukiah primary care
- Clearlake
- Santa Rosa
- Oakland primary care
- Oakland mental health
- Downtown San Francisco

6 Bay Area Veterans housing facilities
Design
## Supplies

### Safer Injection
- Syringes
- Sharps containers
- Tourniquets
- Alcohol swabs
- Wound care kits
- Cookers
- Sterile water
- Ascorbic acid powder

### Other Safer Use
- Snorting kits
- Rectal use kits
- Rubber mouthpieces
- Fentanyl and xylazine test strips

### Safer Sex
- Latex condoms
- Water-based lubricant

### Hygiene
- Hygiene kits
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Mouthwash
- Hand sanitizer
- Lip balm
FAQ’s

• Scan QR code for program website
• Take business card, call pharmacist to sign up; staff referrals
• Quick registration in VA REDCap\textsuperscript{8,9}
• Veterans of any eligibility status can register
• Laminated wallet card mailed, provided in person, accesses all 15 machines
• Scan bar code few inches below reader
• Enter item number(s) requested
• All supplies free and anonymous
Challenges

- Navigating government contracting
- Delivery to VA & non-VA property
- Machine reconfiguration & maintenance
- Sourcing, ordering, receiving, unpacking, packaging, & re-shipping supplies
- Inventory tracking, loss, security
- Lack of storage space & full-time staff
- Managing staff expectations & stigma
- Negative press
- Machine relocation
Successes

• >115 Veterans registered!
• Strong partnership pharmacy & logistics services
• Short-term help packing supplies & stocking machines
• Lockable storage cabinets for inventory
• Pilot social work registration at one clinic, plan for expansion
• Education opportunity, ↑ awareness & acceptance
Pearls

**Veteran engagement**
- Naloxone distribution & other supplies
- Infectious disease testing & treatment
- Substance use care

**Veterans sharing stories**
- Distributing and administering naloxone
- Picking up syringes
- Handing out supplies

**Not just about drug use**
- Trach tube → lubricant
- Diabetes → syringes/sharps containers
- Something in the machine anyone could use → reduce stigma, common ground
Next Steps

• Recruiting logistics and psychology technicians
• Expand social work registration process in outpatient clinics
• 38-gallon sharps disposal bins for community-based outpatient clinics
• UCSF research grant to evaluate program outcomes
  • Veteran and stakeholder feedback
  • Potential cost-benefit
  • Type/quantity of items dispensed, day/time of access, differences by location
• Long-term goal to customize machines to fit Veteran needs at each location
References


Team Members

- Thao Vu, PharmD
- Renée Dembo, BS
- Cedric Thurman, PMHNP
- Sarah Burbank, MD
- Wendy Furnas, LCSW
- Shannon Stevens, LCSW
- Andrew Ruggles, LCSW
- Jenna Ferrara, LCSW
- Mary Sanders, LCSW
- Patricia Montalvo, RN
- Art Hunt, RN

Acknowledgements

- Logistics Service leadership team and staff
- Pharmacy Service leadership team, staff, college and high school students
- Susan Dugdale, Visual Information Specialist
- Ariga Allehyari and Alec Barajas, PharmD Candidates
- Steve Melas, S&B Vending
- Andrew Warner and Michael Robuck, VendNovation
- Beth Dinges, PharmD, and Minh Ho, MD, VHA collaborators

*Veteran consent on file for photograph inclusion.