

# **CARRIES**

***REAL STORIES.***

***SUMMER 2023***

***IOAT-RESEARCH.MED.UBC.CA***



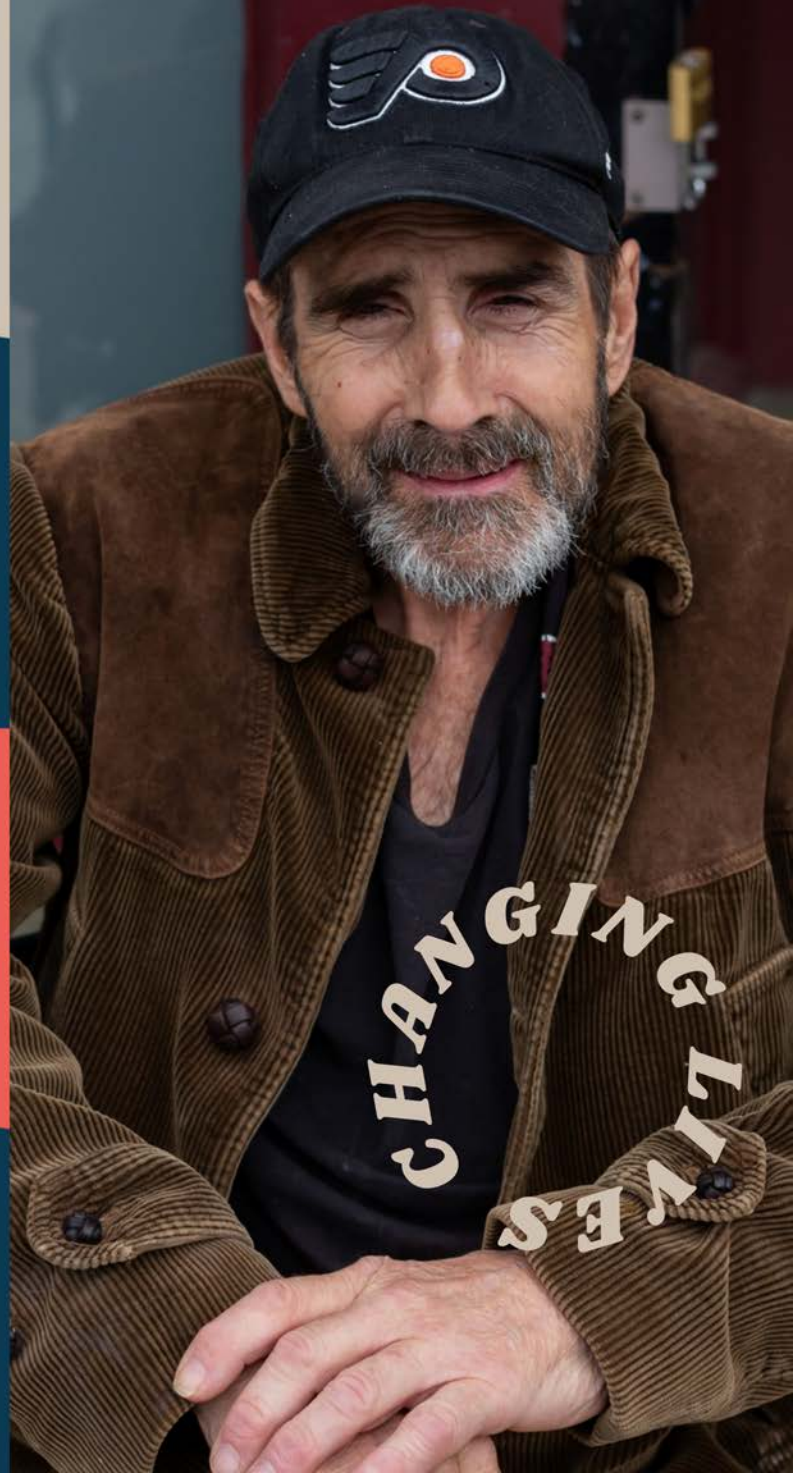


## ***What are Carries?***

Carries are take-home doses or injectable opioid agonist treatment (iOAT). The ability to take this medication offsite frees clients from multiple daily visits to a clinic, and makes a life beyond the few blocks surrounding the iOAT site possible.

Engaging in paid employment, making spontaneous plans with loved ones, leaving the city for the day....all things some people take for granted, can now be reality.

Here's what people in the Carries program at the Crosstown Clinic in Vancouver, BC, as well as people who would like access to the program, had to say.









***This is  
Elwood.***

**After some years of being substance stable, it was clear that the benefits of IOAT were manifold and dramatic.** My relationship with my sister and brother-in-law has developed to a point where they've given me a key to their house on Dundas St. Something they would never have considered even five years previous. Beyond that, my sister and I spend at least two days a week together, meeting at local restaurants, attending concerts and plays ect...With the additions of Carries for a small group of us, the possibilities for work became a reality. Unfortunately, we cannot pick up our carries before 8:00am, seven days a week which hampers working day shifts, but at least it's a beginning. With carries, I can plan day trips with my sister and brother-in-law whereas previously I had to attend the clinic three times a day. Even at this most early point in the carry program where we can only get one day's doses to take home. Clearly, we're able to build lifestyles we could only dream of, having to attend the clinic throughout the day. No, the program may not be perfect with 8:00am pick ups, but it's a start - a step in the right direction.

***-Elwood***






IT'S A START AND A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

# ***This is Coral.***

The Carries Program at Crosstown clinic has been a life changer for me, with the carries I am not as tied down with the clinic and I only have to go once per day instead of twice. This frees me up because I work full-time as a Manager for a non-profit organization, and I also do not live in the DTES so commuting to the clinic takes 30-45 minutes one way. So going to the clinic twice per day takes a lot out of your life. Now that I am stable and haven't used street drugs for 4 years, my life has changed a lot since I was active in my addiction and I am able to have a normal life that includes working having a social life. One of the things that happens when you become stable and you're not involved in the cycle of getting drugs, working on getting drugs and being high, that consumes your whole existence. You need to understand the main thing about addiction recovery is that you have to change your whole life, learn how to socialize and do regular activities, in addiction your life is so focused on drugs that you don't have hobbies or go out and socialize and normal activities slowly slip away until your life is full of just getting high. **Now that I am stable and able to go to the clinic once per day, I can do regular activities in my life that don't involve the cycle of being in addiction.**



Right now, it's important I work on my social life and doing normal activities because this helps me create a community that is not involved with drugs and I feel the more normal I get my life the further the craving and wanting to get high slowly goes away. **I feel the carries are one step of getting some autonomy back into my life and a stepping away from struggling in active addiction.**

I would prefer to have carries for a few days as that would free me up to have more time and ability to do healthy things that don't include coming down to the DTES every day. I think with carries if I were able to get them for a few days it would just free me up to do more things right now, With the carries program I need to work coming into the clinic in the morning with all of my plans I always have to make sure the first thing I do every day includes going to the Clinic, If I had carries longer I feel like like I could relax a bit more , not rushing to clinic so I can feel well every morning, and it would help me feel like I stepped further away from my "active addictions behaviours" when I'm out of the DTES and living my life.

**-Coral**



# *This is Greg.*

To whom this concerns,

I have had my carries for some time now. It has been very time freeing for me to go once a day to the clinic instead of three. However, having to attend the pharmacy everyday at the clinic still ties me to revolving my life around Crosstown Clinic daily. It would be nice to be able to have at least a 7-day carry. To be able to visit family for instance, to have somewhat normal work routine without being tied to the clinic 7 days a week. Also, it would be nice to fill my script at any pharmacy but I guess that is wishful thinking at this time. This program I believe has prolonged my life; **I would not have the quality of life I have now were it not for this program.** It saddens me to see all the dying souls who are not in this program.

A quick note to tell you this program works for me.

Sincerely,

**-Greg**







"Carries have made a huge help in making my life a lot easier! Having to come to the clinic only once a day is a huge difference, and longer carries (i.e. two or three days) would also be a huge help and make my life outside the clinic a lot easier! All in all, **carries bring so much normalcy to my life**, I couldn't say more!"

**- Anonymous**

***This is  
Lisa.***




I've been on the program for 10+ years. Most of that has been stable using nothing but the DAM. It's given me my life back, absolutely.

I used to spend all day boosting, trying to sell stuff, just to take care of my addiction and I lost a lot of years with my daughter because of it, 7 years in fact.

With the carries, it still takes me an hour each way to get to the clinic each day, and I'm home early by about noon each day. **My daughter has a terminal illness, and because of carries, I'm able to be there for her every day and be her only caregiver. Every second is precious.** Having to come down even once a day cuts into my time with her. And I don't like leaving her alone, she has seizures and its terrifying

It's the best we can do right now, and I'm thankful for the carries. I used to come downtown, wait 3 hours for my next shot, then go home, which was terrible. So I am incredibly grateful for the carries program, its cut down my time away from home from 6 hours to 3 hours.





Over Christmas with the snow fall, I live in an area where there are no shuttles or snow plows. I was forced to get a prescription at a pharmacy for methadone and it was not enough. I woke up at 3am sick, and had to wait for the busses and skytrains to run. Luckily I was able to get downtown, but I was gone for 8 hours, I was so sick from the night before.

That's a fear of mine, to be in the clinic everyday. If I could just pick up my prescription, like a regular medication, that would mean I would be gone for half an hour each day (if that). My dream is that one day we'll be able to get a week at a time.

The day I stayed home because of the snow was the best day, my daughter was so excited, we enjoyed the snow and made memories. Luckily I didn't get sick until night time. It seems to me that this should be a right for me as a person who needs daily medication, who can just go to the pharmacy to pick it up. In that way, it still makes me feel like I'm doing something I'm not supposed to be.

**-Lisa**









**"Everybody deserves treatment, no matter if they're using street dope or not. Everybody needs help. We're only human."**

**- Donnie**



"Got more freedom, time to be able to have more of a life, you know, function, instead of knowing you have to come to the shop three times a day. And it's accessible - yeah, I mean workwise, I'm not strapped down to have to leave work to go get a shot."

- *Kevin*





"I had to get carries because I could not leave the job site, I was there for 15 hours. I found the experience to be very, very good, very uplifting. I was running on a lot of adrenaline and it was a great idea. The medication worked out to be really well; I didn't have to leave there. And yeah, I endorse it totally."  
- ***Brent, speaking about having temporary access to carries to participate in an employment opportunity.***



# *This is your neighbour.*



I would like the Government of Canada, and the public to recognize that people who struggle with substance use, WE are not the problem. WE are the solution. I will use myself as an example who was a functioning junkie for many years. I hid it from my partner, my family, myself. I believed I could keep my use under control and keep my job and my life. I was very, very in denial.

Fast forward 2 years, I have no job. I have pawned all my jewelry. I have lied for money. I have ended all my close relationships. Worst of all I have disappointed the most important person in my life. My ever faithful and supportive partner. I was at my bottom and thinking of ending my life, then a miracle happened that was SALOME.

I was lucky enough to be one of the first 10 people to get into the SALOME Study and it saved my life. After a year of being in the study, thanks to the hard work of many people like Dr. Scott McDonald, the study became a program. Along with the medication, and the service they provide of social workers, I was able to work through why I became addicted. I had never done drugs in my life, why I took heroin at the age of 38 is a whole other conversation. The combination of all these things saved my life.





I am happy to say that I have used no street drugs since the first day I began the program. I now work as a Peer Navigator for AidsVancouver helping others fight their use. I am happy with my wonderful partner.

I feel that carries are so important to keeping my life on track. I feel that we have proved that we are part of the solution by getting our lives in order. Many of us are working and not dependent on the government. We are giving back by working in detoxes, safe houses, peers, and Outreach Workers just to name a few. Some of us have moved away from Vancouver into the New Westminster and Surrey areas. It is sometimes impossible to work and also get our medications when we need them. Without carries, many of us will lose our jobs. I think with the right regulations in place it would be a very easy way for us to stay the course and keep our dignity and pride in being independent, contributing member of our community,

Please consider giving us our chance to be part of the solution.

Sincerely,  
***Your neighbour***



Carries -

I AM FULLY ON  
THE RIGHT PATH  
OF BEING THE  
PERSON I  
SHOULD BE

- I essentially see carries as a validation that I am doing well, that all my determination of staying off street drugs is coming to an end, finally.
- Carries would say that I am trusted in my next step of life. That I can take my medication(s) home safely and responsibly. That I am fully on the right path of being the person I should be.
- It should also be noted that the clinic sits arguably <sup>on</sup> the worst corner of the dter, the Columbia & East Hastings location has more than it's fair share of ~~violence~~ drug activity and violence. Clients with carries face less risk of violence or relapse.





# ***CARRIES***

**To all of our partners who shared  
their stories, photos, and time with  
us, thank you.**

**To learn more, visit:  
[ioat-research.med.ubc.ca/](http://ioat-research.med.ubc.ca/)  
or scan here:**



**Photos by Julie Heather Bernard of  
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