



Dear HAMSMaRT and Keeping Six Supporters,

Happy New Year! We hope that your holidays and the first month of your new year was filled with community and peace. This new year brings with it new projects and supports that we will share with you as the year progresses.

This newsletter will feature a new ongoing research spotlight, two new staff members, one from HAMSMaRT and one from K6, as well as the usual point of care testing dates, and donation requests. In addition to the usual information we also have a poem to share written by our very own Keeping Six member, Bill Guyatt. We also would like to share an older (pre-pandemic) blogpost written by Everyone Rides/Hamilton Bike Share about another K6 member, Bill Pugh! Thank you to both Bills for sharing your words and experiences with us.

As we are in the midst of winter, we invite you to donate winter clothes and other necessities for our neighbours who are unhoused. More details below! Please keep warm this season, take care of your loved ones and neighbours, and sit back as the days get longer and longer.

In solidarity,
HAMSMaRT & K6

Ongoing Research Spotlight

Here at HAMSMaRT one of our principles include reciprocal learning with the community. A part of this includes originating, participating, and publishing in research! Our ongoing research spotlight will highlight one of the multiple research projects we are working on.

The IRIS (Injection Related Infections) Program

A sister to the [Second Heart](#) study previously conducted by HAMSMaRT doctors, IRIS aims to improve treatment for participants with injection-related infections by providing a low-barrier, one-stop shop model for accessing holistic and compassionate care. It is a non-randomized clinical trial, meaning it offers a specific program to eligible patients, and includes peer support and systems navigation. The study anticipates enrolling 80 patients in the IRIS program. The participants will be followed throughout the infection treatment period (6-12 weeks). The impact of the program will be evaluated based on treatment completion, emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and death. The study is run through McMaster University and led by previous HAMSMaRT physician Dr. Claire Bodkin. Co-investigators include HAMSMaRT's Dr. Robin Lennox, Dr. Tim O'Shea, and Marcie McIlveen. The recruitment poster is included below!

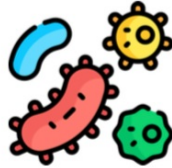


What is the program?

The IRIS Program is a multidisciplinary pilot program and research study aimed at improving health outcomes for people who use drugs when they have an infection related to drug injection.



Patients are connected to a peer support worker, a systems navigator, an infectious diseases physician, and a physician who specializes in substance use related care. This team follows the patient until they complete their course of treatment for their infection or are transitioned to a permanent care setting in the case of chronic infections.



Who is eligible?

- Age 16 or older
- Able to provide informed consent in English
- Presenting to any healthcare setting with a confirmed or suspected injection-related infection (including skin and soft tissue infections, osteomyelitis, infective endocarditis, Hepatitis C, HIV, etc)
- History of injection drug use within 3 months of recruitment
- Lives in City of Hamilton

What does patient participation involve?

Two 30-minute interviews at program enrolment and program completion. \$25 cash, gift card, or e transfer for data collection points (totaling \$50). For participants without a cell phone, they will be provided with a basic cell phone with a talk and text plan for 3 months.



How to refer a patient:

If you think a patient may be eligible, please ask them if they consent to a research coordinator contacting them to offer more information about the study. If they agree, call 905-525-9140 x21572 to leave a confidential voicemail for the research coordinator including:

1. Your name and contact information
2. Patient name
3. Patient location (clinic/hospital) and how to contact them (phone number or email address).

This study is being led by Dr. Robin Lennox and Dr. Claire Bodkin (LPIs) and has been reviewed by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board under Project #16454.

Version 3: February 5, 2024

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February Point Of Care Testing Dates

Next month the Shelter Health Hep C Team will be onsite to test for Hep C, Syphilis, and HIV on:

Tuesday Feb 3, 1-3pm
Thursday Feb 19, 1-3pm



JUST ONE BLAST

William Guyatt, 2026

It is my eighth week at the Toronto Salvation Army Harbour Light dual disorders program. Day by day a victory.

I wake up hearing sirens blaring with folks on the street outside the locked facility screaming.

It is cheque week. In a word: chaos.

I tell myself that I am grateful to be safe and to not be part of the nonsense.

Nonsense with a capital N.

I tell myself that I have no money on me and that I am drug free, and that I have been taking my meds as directed and as monitored.

A triumph.

Still, I think of using. Just one blast.

I tell myself to get out of bed, to shower, and to get a new sanitary mask, and to embrace the day running.

Still, I can smell the dope of a first shot.

I work hard to tell myself of the consequences of shooting up.

I pour a bowl of cereal with milk sprinkling extra sugar on the cereal even though I have just been diagnosed as a diabetic. I furiously turn the radio dial for the CBC news. I love the CBC news because it grounds me in the present.

The urge to use and the triggers to use remain strong but are not as strong as when I first entered the
Toronto Harbour Light.

I smash the run of emotions to use dope with tools that I have learned.

Just what are these tools? To connect with allies and not to be too lonely, tired, angry, or hungry. To ask for help. To launder my clothes and to be well-groomed. And to think of what I could do with the money for drugs instead of financing a dealer's flashy car.

To be grateful for the gift of my life.

By William (Bill) Guyatt

ERI Rider Spotlight: Bill Pugh

This is a snippet from an article written in 2020 by Theron of Hamilton Bike Share.

Thank you to Hamilton Bike Share and to Bill!

Bill Pugh's voice is as vibrant over the phone as it is in real life.

"How ya doing?", he asks me. "I'm thinking of coming by the office to check on my account and chat. Are you in?" I can hear the wind behind Bill whistling loudly as he makes his way to his next destination. I inform him with regret, thinking of our mutually enjoyable talks at the office, that we are working from home nowadays. He sucks in his breath. "Of course! Can't believe I forgot. Next time, then. In the meantime, could you check on my account? Want to make sure I'm good to ride- got a lot to do today."

[Read the full article here!](#)

Staff Spotlight

Each month do a staff spotlight! We would like to recognize the folks in both HAMSMaRT and K6 that do hard work for our Hamilton community everyday. **We have asked them about why they joined HAMSMaRT/K6, what other work they do outside of here, and any hobbies they may have!** Every month you can find a new spotlight on a HAMSMaRT and K6 staff member or volunteer. We hope you enjoy getting to know the people behind the scenes here at our partnered organizations!

K6 | Jammy Lo



Jammy is one of the founding members of Keeping Six and has worked here in multiple different capacities since the first day K6 was born. She wears many hats but her official title is Peer Events Coordinator. She acts as an occasional a spokesperson and ambassador for K6 and hosts community events like K6 Open Mic Nights.

Jammy also participates in multiple research projects and engages with the community every chance she gets. She is a staple emcee at Overdose Awareness Day events and is even working the Junos at TD Coliseum this March! "I try to stickup for everybody when I can," Jammy says, and the community definitely agrees.

In her spare time, Jammy is currently working on getting her drivers license, and broadening her education by completing workshops and certificates. "Little by little" she is striving to build a life she loves.

HAMSMaRT | Marcie McIlveen

Marcie has been the program director at HAMSMaRT for 5 years. As someone with lived experience, Marcie says she did not trust or engage much with healthcare prior to meeting the team of healthcare workers that understood her reluctance. Working with this group of people helped Marcie with her own journey as well as allowed her to build a supportive community for others.

Marcie is also a part-time professor at McMaster University, where she teaches undergraduate social work students a course on Harm Reduction & Trauma. She also manages the St. Joe's Substance Use Support team, consisting of peer workers, social workers, and a nurse. She is a well respected figure within the Hamilton harm reduction community and continues to participate in community building all around the city!

When not at work, Marcie is either spending time with family, working on her Bachelors of Applied Science degree, or making the people around her laugh!



Donate Now!

We encourage you to donate to HAMSMaRT and make a difference in your community. Your donations will be used to purchase food, medical supplies, hygiene products and toiletries, and other outreach and clinic supplies. **You can donate by clicking the button below and choosing the donate option on our website.** You can sign up for a **one time donation or a monthly donation.** All donations to HAMSMaRT are tax deductible and you can request a donation letter from us for large amounts. We look forward to working with you to provide those in need with the great healthcare and daily living essentials that we all deserve!

[Donate Here](#)

We would like to acknowledge and thank our current primary funders: the Hamilton Community Foundation, Ontario HIV Treatment Network, the Karen & Peter Turkstra Family Foundation, Incite Foundation for the Arts, the Canadian Mental Health Association, James A. Burton & Family Foundation, and The Hainsworth Trust. Thank you and we hope to continue to nurture our partnerships together! Additionally, we would like to thank the everyday folks who donate \$5, \$10, or \$15 through our website as a one time donation or a monthly donation. We know that making ends meet can be hard and we appreciate you giving back to your community through us - in whatever way you can! However large or small, your continued donations have allowed us to keep supporting our clients and community members. It is because of you all that we are able to give people a safe place for their medical care and wrap-around needs. Thank you to all of our amazing donors!

Winter Clothing Drive!

As the cold weather continues, we are still asking for donations for our clients and neighbours who are unhoused. As you go through your winter clothing bins, keep us in mind. **Around 2,000 people** in our city are sleeping rough this winter as shelters are consistently full and the cost of living keeps rising. Every year, the winter results in people suffering from hypothermia, frostbite, trenchfoot, and sometimes even death. Help us help those who are outside this winter by donating your used warm winter clothing! They will be distributed both in clinic and during outreach services. Thank you!

HAMSMaRT/K6

Winter Clothing Drive

We are looking for clothing donations for our clients!

We are especially looking for:



- Jackets
- Hats
- Gloves/Mitts
- Scarves
- Sweaters
- Sweatpants
- Weather/waterproof clothing
- Boots and Socks



Drop off Tuesday or Thursday
@ 660 Main St E
10am - 4pm

Questions? Email clinics@hamsmart.ca

February Newsletter - What's Next?

On next month's newsletter you can expect from us:

- Annual General Meeting - will be held virtually on Feb 9 and all updates will be shared next month!
- meet our board members - who are they?
- dates for March Hep C Testing - new month, new opportunities to test!
- meet two new staff members!

The Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team (HAMSMaRT) is a nonprofit organization of health providers and community organizers working to integrate clinical practice, critical analysis and political action. We work to advance the idea and practice that health is inherently political and health care providers must play a role in bringing about change in the social and material conditions which determine health.

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