

# Canadian News Media Coverage on Harm Reduction Featuring Bereaved Mothers: A Mixed Methods Analysis

Heather Morris, Cam Wild, Marina Giovannoni, Rebecca Haines-Saah, Jakob Koziel, Petra Schulz, Hauwa Bwala, & Elaine Hyshka

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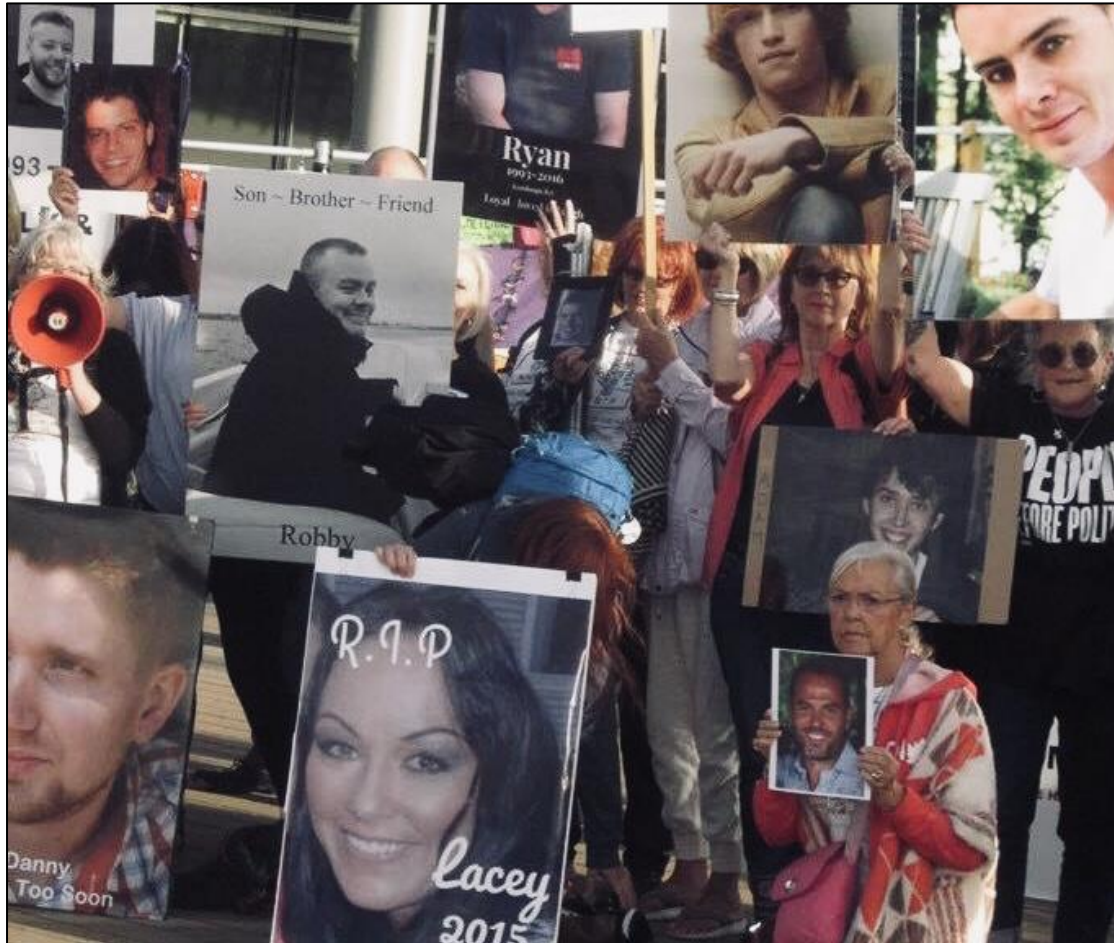




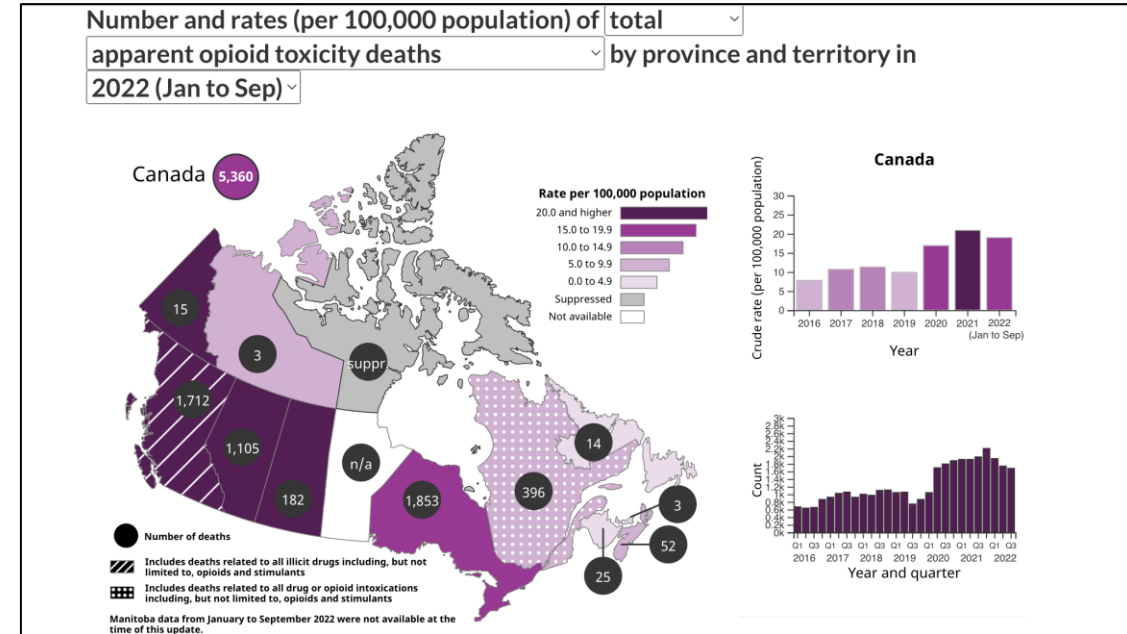
# Presentation Outline

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1. Overview of Canada's drug poisoning crisis.
2. What is media advocacy?
3. Literature review
4. Methods
  1. Source Documents
  2. Article screening, inclusion criteria and verification
5. Quantitative Content & Qualitative Thematic Analysis
6. Findings
7. Discussion
8. Conclusion



# Canada's Drug Poisoning Crisis



Source: Government of Canada, March 2023





Petra Schulz holds a picture of her son, Danny, who she lost to a fentanyl overdose, in Edmonton on March 27. She commended recent changes by the federal government, such as increasing access to methadone and prescription heroin.

# Media Advocacy

- Public actors impact public opinion through use of the media (radio, tv, newspapers, social media)
- Impact of public opinion on policy is substantial (Burstein, 2003)
- Community opposition was cited as the greatest external barrier faced by service providers attempting to establish harm reduction programs in Canada (Hobden & Cunningham, 2006)

# Literature Review

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Media Reach of  
Bereaved Mothers in  
Canada

Effect of Media on  
Public Support for Harm  
Reduction – How might  
it work?

Framing of Substance  
Use in the Media

Message Framing  
Studies Featuring a  
Mother Whose Child  
Died of Substance Use  
Related Causes

# Canadian news media coverage on harm reduction featuring bereaved mothers: A mixed methods analysis

## Research Questions

- How often are bereaved mothers represented in newspaper coverage of harm reduction?
- What are the underlying discourses seen in Canadian newspaper coverage on harm reduction which feature a bereaved mother whose child's death was related to substance use?

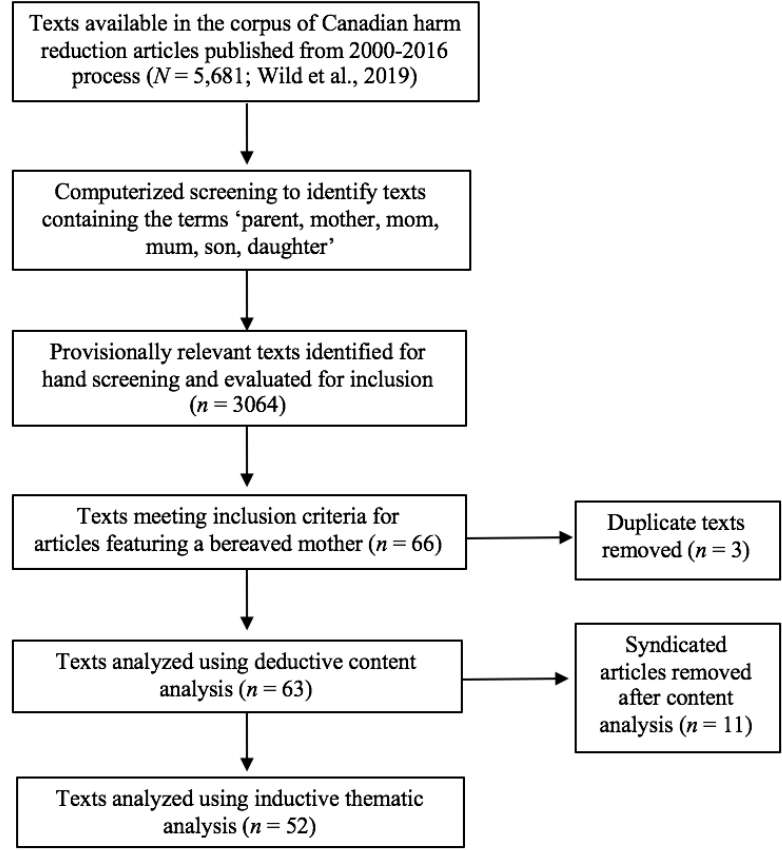
## Methods

- CHARPP (Wild et al., 2019) secondary analysis of 5681 newspaper articles on harm reduction 2000-2016
- 54 newspapers
- Ethical Approval: Not required

## Data Analysis

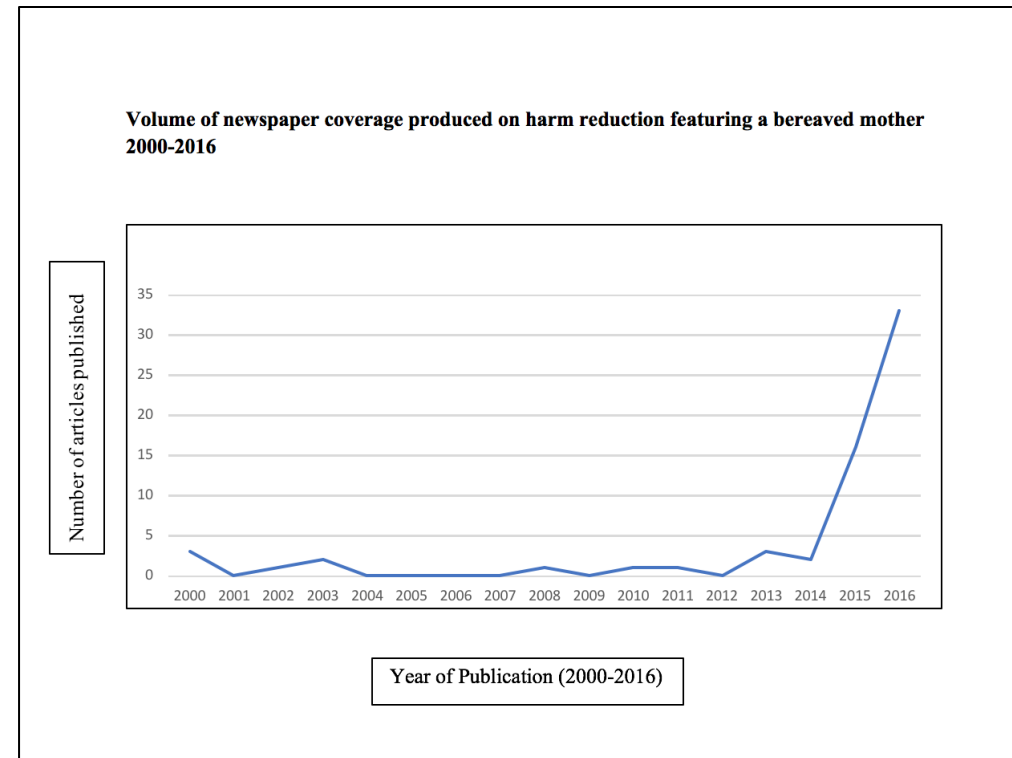
- 2/6: Quantitative Content Analysis of **63 articles** (Krippendorff, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017) -Excel & SPSS(27)/STATA – Descriptive stats to determine valid N, % for all items at a national level
- 3/6: Qualitative Thematic Analysis of **52 articles** (Braun & Clarke, 2006) – NVIVO 12 Methodological/analytical rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Screening and verification process



# Question #1: *How often are bereaved mothers who have lost a child to substance use represented in newspaper coverage of harm reduction?*

- 1.1% of newspaper coverage of harm reduction 2000-2016 featured a bereaved mother
- Child's history of substance use described (52.4% )
- Stigmatizing language used=81%
- Info on resources/support NOT provided=84.1%
- Harm Reduction advocated for by mother 77.8% of time (Naloxone-27%; SCS-22.2%)





**Question #2:** *What are the underlying discourses seen in Canadian newspaper coverage on harm reduction which feature a bereaved mother whose child's death is related to substance use?*

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**Primary Themes:**

- The news media's emphasis on a mother's grief
- Highlighting individual over structural determinants of substance-related harms
- Rhetorical divisions between different types of people who use drugs



## Theme #1: The News Media's Emphasis on a Mother's Grief

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*“There’s a misconception that you heal after a death. You don’t’, said [Mother], [Mother’s age]. ‘You just learn how to integrate that loss. It’s a daily struggle. I will never see my son again, I will never see him marry, I will never have grandchildren. It’s the loss of all your hopes and dreams.’”  
(Toronto Star, July 29, 2013)*



## Theme #2: Highlighting Individual Over Structural Determinants of Substance-Related Harms

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*“The young man, once worshipped by his younger sister and brother, began to slip away when he got into fentanyl. He spent six months on the street, later telling his mom, ‘You don’t even want to know what I did.’ He stole family heirlooms. He pawned his mother’s engagement ring. He withdrew \$6000 from his mom’s bank account by forging cheques. He also convinced his parents to pay off a \$10,000 drug debt and he called them to bail him out of jail.” (Calgary Herald, Dec. 18, 2015)*





### Theme #3: Rhetorical divisions between different types of people who use drugs

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*“Before he died, [Son] looked nothing like the self-destructive wreck that is the public’s image of a heroin user. He was a bright 19-year-old, an excellent student who had recently graduated from high school. He was also an independent, creative spirit who read widely, including Henry Miller, James Joyce, Anais Nin and many others ...” (The Ottawa Citizen. Sept. 11, 2000)*

# Discussion

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- Harm reduction reporting & public health perspectives
- Absent perspectives of PWUD
- Further Research
- Practical implications
- Limitations of our study



# Conclusion

We fight for those we  
love and lost

