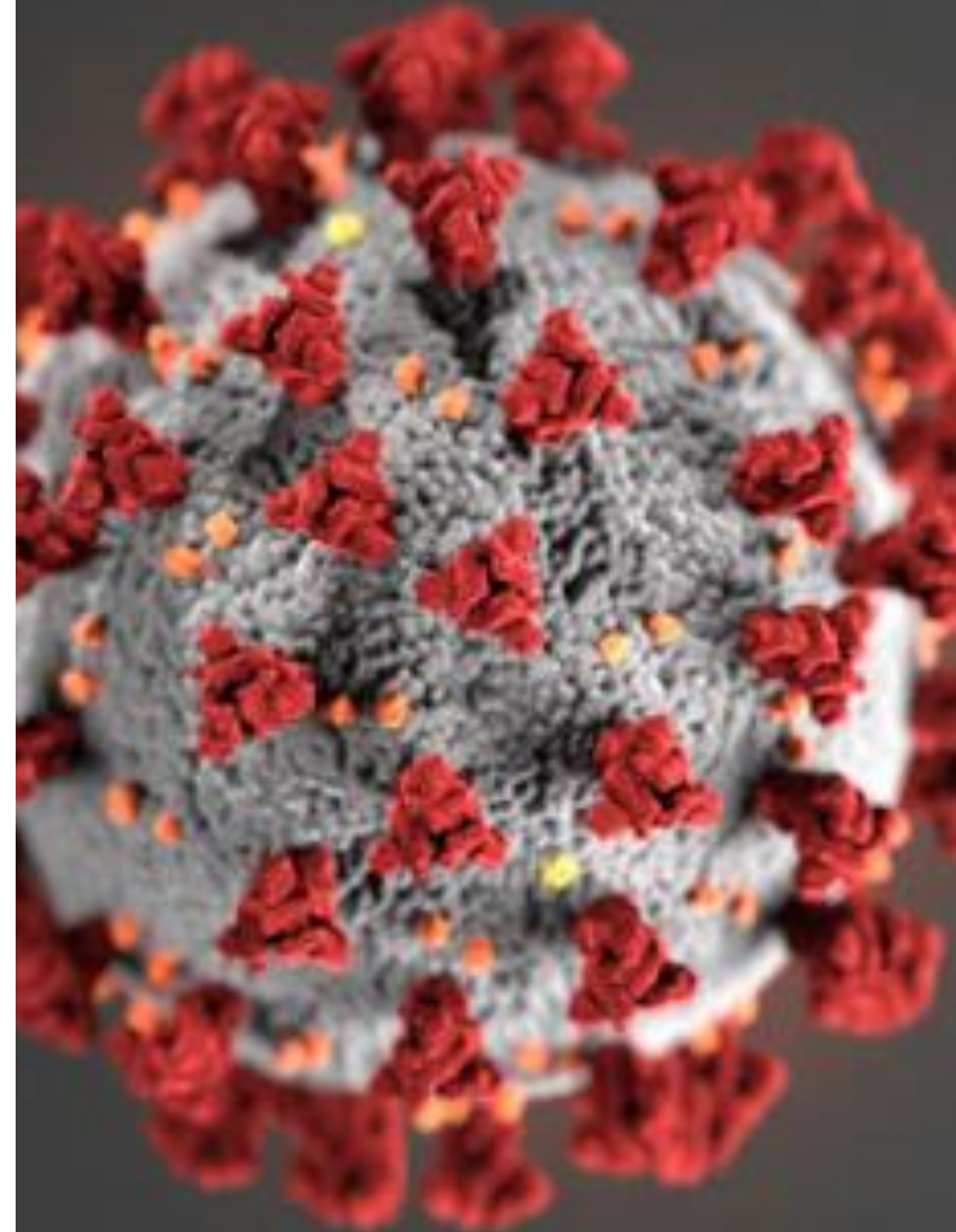




'WHAT'S A FEW EXCESS DEATHS IN THE FACE OF COVID?'

DR ROB EWIN

DETECTIVE SERGEANT



HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

A JOB FOR POLICING?

- Ewin, R., Reed, A., & Powell, L. (2020). Middle childhood vulnerability to drugs and alcohol. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*.
- COVID 19 led to an increased level of population surveillance activity related to health, requiring an additional role for policing in communities.
- Policing public spaces, gyms, super markets and even private spaces.
- Establishment of mass testing capability for disease.
- An increase in drug related deaths.

RURAL.

HEALTH INEQUALITY.

A CHANGE IN SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

- In 2020 the local constabulary attended over one thousand reported sudden or suspicious death incidents, this had increased by 5.6% compared to the previous year.
- Lockdown 1 (March - May 20) - > 45%
- General Restrictions (March – Nov, 20) - > 33%

RURAL.

HEALTH INEQUALITY.

A CHANGE IN SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

- The use of drugs to commit suicide does not appear a primary aim in the activity of regular drug taking, the deaths from drugs appear an unintended outcome to the user.
- Those who consume drugs, become to unconscious and die from respiratory or cardiovascular shock, do not necessarily involve acts of suicide. Some of these deaths have more appropriately been described in current literature as self-injury mortality (Rockett & Caine, 2020).

RURAL.

HEALTH INEQUALITY.

A CHANGE IN SOCIALISATION.

- Changed practices for dispensing controlled drugs, a lack of face-to-face health contact, the ‘help’ availability (help seeking) and self-isolation with a continued but changed access to illicit drug delivery. Prescribing practices in health systems also responded to reduce public contact in line with new recommendations to control the virus (PHE and DoH&SC, 2020).
- Those who consume drugs, become to unconscious and die from respiratory or cardiovascular shock, do not necessarily involve acts of suicide. Some of these deaths have more appropriately been described in current literature as self-injury mortality (Rockett & Caine, 2020).

LOCKDOWN 1

MARCH – MAY

2020

- 4/6 – History of domestic abuse.
- 5/6 – History of low mood or depression.
- 6/6 – History of known drug use.
- 3/6 – Friendship help-seeking.
- 2/6 – involved someone on Opioid Substitute Treatment
- Aged between 35-48.
- 4 women & 2 Men.
- No suicide note or evidence of suicide.

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

MAY – NOV

2020

- Few with reported Domestic Abuse History.
- 3/6 – Involved being ‘missing’.
- 4/6 – mention lost contact.
- 3/6 – History of depression and low mood.
- 6/6 – History of known drug use.
- 3/6 – Strong links to County Lines
- 4/6 – evidence of prescribed medicated treatments.
- Aged between 45-57
- Mostly Men.
- No suicide note or evidence of suicide.

**NEITHER SYSTEM
CATERS FOR DRUG
USERS WHOSE
HABITS REVOLVE
AROUND
SATISFYING AN
ADDICTIVE
BEHAVIOUR USING
ROUTINE.**

-
- Public health emergencies employing the use of large-scale public isolation represents distinct risk to drug using communities.
 - The dispensing of controlled medication provided a regulated flow of drugs which supports regular user habits.
 - Drugs supply activity, affected by public health crisis, may increase user desire to gain access to larger amounts due to uncertainty of continued supply.
 - Health and policing surveillance systems should afford some support to identified drug users combining policing and health data.

THANK YOU

