

International Overdose Awareness Day 2016 – August 31

On August 31 more people than ever before joined together and across the globe to remember people who have died or been injured as a result of overdose.

The extraordinary outpouring of grief from around the world on our website and on our Facebook page showed that the campaign had successfully tapped into the silent suffering of thousands of people who face the stigma of overdose in their community.

One piece of feedback summed up the responses of many people:

“I just wanted to thank you for having this site that we can come together and share our sadness and grief. With the stigma attached to drug use it can be so isolating for those going through it or those who have lost someone from it-by having this for 'them' and for 'us' is so special and important. I lost my best friend in 2012 and buried my ex last Monday. I have lost so many before my best friend and in between both significant deaths to me, that having this as an outlet I can talk to them without being judged and understood by those who also going through the same emotion is comforting. August 31st is the day when I feel the closest to those I have lost. Thanks again”

Many event organizers were motivated into action by the strength of the creative for the campaign. Many people organized an event for the first time, while others still took the initiative to use the creative that we had provided in a variety of impactful ways.

For example in Boston, the Boston Medical Center used the poster designs from the campaign to create big signs that they used to great effect in the pathways around their facility. As Alicia Ventura, Director of Operations for Office Based Addiction Treatment at the Boston Medical Center wrote:

“I want say THANK YOU for the amazing resources that you have created. We are going to be observing International Overdose Awareness Day as well as Recovery Month on our campus and would like to use some of your materials. I just purchased 1,000 pins, which we will distribute. We also have been so impressed with the poster campaign that you created that we would like to blow the posters up and place them around campus. Thank you so much for your time and response and for all that you have done to get these resources out into the global community!!! I can't say it enough times.

The theme in 2016 was Time to Remember. Time to Act.

The theme emphasized that time is the thing that is most crucial in avoiding an overdose. The time it takes to administer a reversal drug like naloxone can help save a person's life.

It is also time for more people to look at the reasons behind why overdoses happen. People are dying because they are not aware of the risks involved with taking drugs. Talking about drugs is taboo. The stigma and shame as well as the legal consequences of drug use means that people are alone or don't call out for help if something goes wrong.

It is also time for communities across the world that do not have a system of distributed naloxone for potential overdose witnesses to take action to help prevent and reverse overdose.

It is also time to make overdose prevention a priority in our community by lobbying for policy change, by educating the community about ways to prevent overdose, and by challenging the shame and stigma that is associated with overdose.

The results of our campaign in 2016 were impressive – but there is plenty of scope to improve on what was achieved. The Penington Institute does not receive funding to support International Overdose Awareness Day and so a major challenge for 2017 is to get a major sponsor in place so that the day is sustainable in the long term.

In terms of numbers we can report the following highlights of the campaign in 2016:

- A 95.4 per cent increase in events from 2015 to 340, with events in the USA numbering 217.
- Events were held in 16 countries including Australia, Canada, England, Ghana, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, and the USA;
- In the 12 months leading up to the day, 1040 people sent in tributes to people who had overdosed.
- More than 270,000 people visited the overdoseday.com website with 84 per cent of visitors being new to the site.
- Significant audience gains were made on social media channels – particularly Facebook – with likes moving from below 2,000 to over 20,000 during the campaign this year. There was a significant boost to the reach of our Facebook campaign with a peak 28 day reach above 1.4 million people (1,448,846 peak).
- This year 5,659 people shared an Overdose Awareness message on their social media profile using Twibbon.
- For the first time campaign materials were available in languages other than English: Vietnamese, French, Spanish, and Arabic.

To find out more about International Overdose Awareness Day visit: www.overdoseday.com

To connect with us on social media visit:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalOverdoseAwarenessDay/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/OverdoseDay>

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Stock photo. Posed by model.

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