

# Invited Speaker Presentations

**IS – 16**

## **Telemedicine to facilitate access to substance use counselling and treatment**

Jeffrey Lai

Emergency Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School

The opioid epidemic is an ongoing public health emergency throughout the United States (US), with communities in the Northeast being especially hard-hit. In 2015, more people died from a drug overdose in the US than from traffic accidents and gun homicides combined. Emergency departments (EDs) are the primary sites of medical care after near-fatal opioid overdose, but are not ideally equipped to initiate adequate long-term substance use treatment planning prior to discharge. This results in a cycle of successive resuscitations and discharges, culminating in a final fatal overdose. In many locales, limited access to clinicians trained in addiction medicine and behavioral health exacerbates this problem. In an effort to improve post-overdose care in the ED, we developed a telemedicine protocol to facilitate timely access to substance use disorder evaluations (SUDEs). In this talk, we will discuss the conception and refinement of the telemedicine program, and our experience piloting this protocol within our ED.