

BIGMUN 2018
ECOSOC 4 – Commission of Narcotic Drugs

Research Report

Topic 3: The question of supervised injection facilities



Emil Friis and Cecilia Jørgensen

Introduction

Around the world, injected drugs have always been a huge issue that has raised many questions and arguments, both social and economic. Different countries have taken their own roads on solving some of these issues that arise from injected drugs. One solution that some countries have used to solve issues related to injected drugs, is by opening supervised injection facilities. ¹There are many reasons that countries have implemented laws, allowing the presence of supervised injection facilities. The main reasons for this is to prevent the spread of HIV, to give advice and guidance to the people who inject drugs and decrease the numbers of overdoses, as well as allowing research and data collection to be easily recorded.²

HIV has become a huge issue in the world today. Since 1992, the percent of the population between the ages of 15-49 had increased from 0.3% to 0.8% in 2016.³ However, the prevalence of HIV in 2016, the number of people living with HIV reached around 36.7 million.⁴ Out of those, 1 million of the people died due to an HIV related issue. ⁵ HIV is a common disease that has spread through the population of people that inject drugs. This is mainly through the share of needles, as bodily fluids, such as blood, is transferred from one person to the other. In 2013, the number of people who inject drugs worldwide was estimated to be 12.19 million and out of this, an estimated 1.65 million were living with HIV.⁶

Definitions of key terms

Supervised injection facilities (SIF)- legally sanctioned and supervised facilities designed to reduce the health and public order problems associated with illegal injection drug use.⁷

PWID-people who inject illegal substances/drugs with the use of needles.⁸

Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV)- It is a virus that is passed on through specific bodily fluids (semen, blood, vaginal and anal fluids, and breast milk), which attacks the immune system, our body's natural defense against illnesses. HIV cannot be cured, but if not treated, it can lead to the most severe phase of HIV, known as AIDS. ⁹

Drug-induced deaths- people who die directly due to the use of illegal substances¹⁰

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC314055/>

² <http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/supervised-injection-facilities>

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.AIDS.ZS?view=chart>

⁴ http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20170720_Data_book_2017_en.pdf

⁵ http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20170720_Data_book_2017_en.pdf

⁶ http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/hiv-aids/new/drug-use_and_HIV.html

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC314055/>

⁸ http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/hiv-aids/new/drug-use_and_HIV.html

⁹ <https://www.avert.org/about-hiv-aids/what-hiv-aids>

¹⁰ <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/data/stats2017/drd>

Background Information

In June 1986, the first supervised drug facility was opened.¹¹ This intervention began in Berne, Switzerland and in the subsequent years spread throughout Europe to Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark, Greece and France. Currently, there are 78 official supervised injection facilities that operate in seven EMCDDA reporting countries.¹²

There are also three more supervised injection sites located outside of Europe. In 2003, North America's first legal supervised injection site was opened in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Canada, due to a high number of long-term drug user residents.¹³ Its aims were to operate under a harm-reduction model, aiming to decrease health, social and economic consequences of drug use. Its second supervised injection facility opened in July, 2017. Both facilities operate under a Health Canada exemption from prosecution under federal drug laws. In 2001, the first supervised injection site in Oceania was opened in Sydney, Australia.¹⁴

Since the opening of these Supervised Injection Facilities, there has been a decrease in the number of overdoses.¹⁵ The injection site in Vancouver, Insite, which opened in 2003, has had 3.6 million clients so far that have injected illicit drugs under supervision by nurses. Out of these, there have been 48,798 clinical treatment visits and 6,440 overdose interventions without any deaths.¹⁶ The number of shared needles between individuals have also decreased, after the opening of these facilities. This has helped to decrease the spread of diseases transferred through blood, such as HIV and hepatitis C.

Although it hasn't directly increased the amount of PWID by opening these facilities, it has increased the amount of drug dealings in the areas near the facilities.¹⁷ Therefore, it may bring issues to the residents living near the supervised injection sites. Although, it has been proved that by opening these facilities, it has not encouraged drug use, nor increased the rates of relapse among former injection drug users, as well as discouraged them from seeking treatment, there has been an increase in participants smoking crack cocaine. It is unlikely, however, that the facility, prompted this change.¹⁸

Before the availability of supervised injection facilities, drug consumers would use illegal shooting galleries, where they would have to pay to inject. Normally these areas were not hygienic and the

¹¹ http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

¹² http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

¹³ http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

¹⁴ <http://www.vch.ca/public-health/harm-reduction/supervised-injection-sites>

¹⁵ http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

¹⁶ <http://www.vch.ca/public-health/harm-reduction/supervised-injection-sites>

¹⁷ http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

¹⁸ http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

people working there were not professional doctors or nurses.¹⁹ Therefore, there became a rise in HIV among these people, by the sharing of needles. Furthermore, the number of overdoses would be high, as there would be no medical help nearby, if a person was suffering from an overdose, leading to an increase of drug induced deaths. In the United States, they do not have any supervised injection facilities and therefore people use shooting galleries or inject themselves on the streets. The United States has the highest number of drug induced deaths²⁰, accounting for about one quarter of the estimated deaths worldwide. During the period 1999-2015, the number of overdose deaths, mostly driven by opioids, tripled from 16,849 to 52,404 annually.²¹ This is one of the main reasons why there has been debates and arguments in the United States on whether to implement these facilities, as so many suffer from overdoses.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Countries that currently have supervised injection facilities are Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Spain, Denmark, Australia, and Canada. Although, quite a few countries such as Scotland and Ireland have been discussing whether to implement these facilities as well.²²

Furthermore, major organizations that have acted in providing guidance for PWID to reduce the spread of HIV infections include:²³

- World Health Organization(WHO)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is an organization that provides EU and its member states with factual and reliable information on drugs and drug addiction, as well as their consequences. It aims to provide evidence to inform policymaking and guide initiatives to tackle drugs.²⁴

¹⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC314055/>

²⁰ <https://www.overdoseday.com/resources/facts-stats/>

²¹ <https://www.overdoseday.com/resources/facts-stats/>

²² http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

²³ http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/hiv-aids/new/drug-use_and_HIV.html

²⁴ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/emcdda_en

Relevant UN Resolutions

Resolution 60/8

This resolution was put in place, to promote measures to prevent HIV and other blood-borne diseases associated with the use of drugs, and increasing financing towards the global HIV/AIDS response and for drug use prevention and other drug demand reduction measures.

Resolution 56/6

This resolution intensifies the efforts to achieve the targets of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS among people who use drugs, the main target being to reduce HIV transmission among people who inject drugs by 50 per cent by 2015.

Resolution 53/9

For this resolution, it focuses on achieving universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for drug users and people living with or affected by HIV.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

To solve issues that occur from people who inject drugs, countries have tackled them differently. Some countries, as was mentioned earlier, have opened supervised injection facilities to prevent the spread of HIV amongst these people, monitor and record factual data, prevent overdoses and provide guidance and advice.

Many people in the PWID community suffer from HIV. Therefore, they have created nine interventions to prevent the spread of HIV infections amongst the people who inject drugs. Committees from the United Nations (WHO / UNODC / UNAIDS), have worked together to enforce these interventions, the first four proving to be most effective. Bellow, they are listed in order: ²⁵

1. Needle and syringe programmes (NSPs)
2. Opioid substitution therapy (OST) and other evidence based drug dependence treatment
3. HIV testing and counselling (HTC)
4. Antiretroviral therapy (ART)
5. Prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
6. Condom programmes for people who inject drugs and their sexual partners
7. Targeted information, education and communication (IEC) for people who inject drugs and their sexual partners
8. Prevention, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment for viral hepatitis
9. Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis (TB)

²⁵ http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/hiv-aids/new/drug-use_and_HIV.html

Possible Solutions

Many countries still suffer from issues related to injected drugs. The United States still suffer from a high number of drug induced deaths every year.²⁶ Therefore, a possible beginning for solving issues like these, would be to open more supervised injection facilities. This would help fight against the ongoing HIV epidemic, as well as the spread of hepatitis C, amongst these communities and allow professionals to give guidance and advice, to prevent the number of overdoses occurring.

Another possible solution to tackle this, would be to have more organizations that provide interventions and guidance to young people, discouraging them from starting to inject drugs in the first place, and warn them of the possible hazards and dangers related to injected drugs.

²⁶ <https://www.overdoseday.com/resources/facts-stats/>

Bibliography

Websites:

Wright, NMJ, Tompkins, CNE (10/01/04) Visited 26/12/17. Available at:

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/>

Visited 26/12/17. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC314055/>

Visited 26/12/17. Available at: <http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/supervised-injection-facilities>

(2017) Visited 29/12/17. Available at: <http://www.vch.ca/public-health/harm-reduction/supervised-injection-sites>

Visited 29/12/17. Available at: http://www.drugwarfacts.org/chapter/supervised_consumption

(November 2017) Visited 29/12/17. Available at:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs360/en/>

Visited 2/1/18. Available at: <http://www.unaids.org>

Visited 3/1/18. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.AIDS.ZS?view=chart>

Visited 8/1/18. Available at: http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/data/stats2017_en

Visited 8/1/18. Available at: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/emcdda_en

Fedotov Y. (May 2017) Visited 10/1/18. Available at:

<https://www.overdoseday.com/resources/facts-stats/>