Low threshold services for injecting NPS users

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Health responses to NPS
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Introduction

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- Context – current situation
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Introduction

- Alternatíva Foundation
  Harm reduction
  HIV, HCV, STD
  PWID, sex workers, MSM
Introduction – 8th district

- Few blocks
- IDU community with very dense social network
- Run-down buildings
- Abandoned lots
Context - current situation

“Traditional” and NPSs in the substances seized between 2009-2013

Source: BSZKI 2014
Number of cannabis and synthetic cannabinoid seizures between 2010-2014

Source: BSZKI 2014
Health consequences of NPS use

- Drug induced psychosis became regular in everyday psychiatric practice.
- Patients report MDPV-like new drugs: „crystal”, „benzone”: the consumed drug or drugs remains unclear, due to difficulties in accessing required laboratories.
- Treatment demands relating to heroin use dropped significantly.
- NPSs cause physical and mental problems in a relatively short time --> harmful consequences develop rapidly; treatment demand after short period of time.

Health consequences of NPS use

HCV prevalence among injecting drug users

- National
- Budapest
- Outside of Budapest
Challenges in responding to NPS, new patterns?
- Lack of information
  - no research, no risk assessment, long term eff.?
  - street names --> EWS useless
  - even dealers have no idea
- Polidrug use – synthetic cannabinoids!!
- Younger clients have serious problems
- Increased injection frequency
- Legislation – new substances appearing continuously
  - we have to start over again and again
- No substitution therapy/rehabs/spec. interventions
Context - current situation

*Primarily injected drugs among new clients at NEP (Blue Point)*
Low threshold services for NPS users

Why this setting relevant?

- First services to meet with new substance users
  -> Firsthand information
  -> inform other service providers, ER, etc
- Could provide health interventions on site
  (tailored to client needs)
- Harm reduction for active users
- Door to other services (treatment, rehab, shelter, etc.)

BUT

low threshold services without a comprehensive strategy worth nothing...
Context - current situation

- Decreasing coverage (2013: 76,5 syringes/IDU/year)

Number of distributed and collected syringes at NEPs in Hungary

- Decreasing coverage (2013: 76,5 syringes/IDU/year)
Low threshold services for NPS users

- Health interventions to NPS users
  - Quick test and counselling (HIV, HCV, other...)
    - on-site
    - assessing risk behaviours
    - provide pre-, post test counselling
    - help to get treatment
  - Promote intervention
- Foil distribution
- Extend services → eg. shelters
**Conclusion**

- **NPS specific interventions**
  - It has happened before - we know what works
  - Back to the basics
    -> general harm reduction (not substance specific)
  - Scale up needle exchange programmes
  - Inrease coverage
  - Strengthen cooperation
  - Complex, integrated services
  - (Evaluation, research)
Thank you for your attention!
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researchgate.net/profile/Robert_Csak
Key publications - Hungary

- National Focal Point – http://drogfokuszpont.hu/?lang=en