The role of the safe injection facility in Oslo and the opening hours on patterns of ambulance call-outs for overdose

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The Norwegian safe injection facility (SIF)

- Regulated by specific “injection room” bill (by parliament 2004)
- Safe injection facility opened in Oslo in 2005 (and in Bergen in 2016)
- Only for injection of heroin
  - No other drugs, no inhalation

Aims:
To provide a safe and hygienic facility to inject heroin and to reduce OD risk
To provide harm reduction, and to be a gate-way to the treatment system
The Oslo safe injection facility

• Co-located with low-threshold facility and 2 min away from “central” ambulance station
• Always 3 staff of which at least one is nurse during opening hours

• Staff do not administer naloxone to OD victims at the facility

• In case of OD at SIF the staff call the ambulance and give first aid; rescue breathing by bag etc.

• Upon ambulance arrival the ambulance staff give naloxone by injection; normally i.m. and other required first aid
Activity and overdoses at the SIF 2015-2016

- Oslo a city of 600,000 inhabitants
- SIF had 35,000 injections and 333 overdoses in 2015
- SIF had 33,000 injections and 295 overdoses in 2016
  - Around 900 individual users per year

- A total of 627 overdoses and an overdose rate of 0.94% (2015) and 0.88% (2016) per injection
- Overall ~ 0.9% overdose risk per injection at SIF in Oslo
  - Among 18-29 group; OD risk ~ 2.0% overdose risk per injection

- No fatal events since opening in 2005
“Reasons” for OD given by victims

- 462 (74%) Polydrug (mostly benzo and alcohol) typically taken before SIF
- 351 (56%) Reduced tolerance (following prison release and treatment)
- 219 (35%) Reduced/poor somatic health
- 219 (35%) Very potent heroin taken
- 147 (23%) Taken “high dose”

Multiple responses possible

Study population

• All ambulance call-outs during 2014-2015 reviewed from “central ambulance station”; (1 of 5 stations in Oslo; 80% of naloxone use)

• 48,825 ambulance calls
• 1054 were for opioid overdoses (responded to naloxone injection)
• The rate of calls for overdoses was 1 out of 48 of the total ambulance calls in central Oslo

✓ 465 individuals during 2014 and 2015
✓ Standard 0.4mg naloxone i.m., thereafter titration to response
Oslo Safe Injection Facility

✓ Overdoses are “common” at the SIF in Oslo and make up nearly half of the city’s ambulance-attended overdoses during their opening hours

✓ Clinical symptoms of SIF patients were more severe
  • likely due to the SIF staffs’ ability to monitor longer before calling

✓ Further, the high percentage of SIF patients who received pre-hospital discharge indicate that the SIF functions as a place to receive follow-up care

➢ SIF has a role both for monitoring of potential overdoses, as well as observing the victims after receiving ambulance care