

COVID-19 survey among people who use drugs in three cities in Norway; 2020

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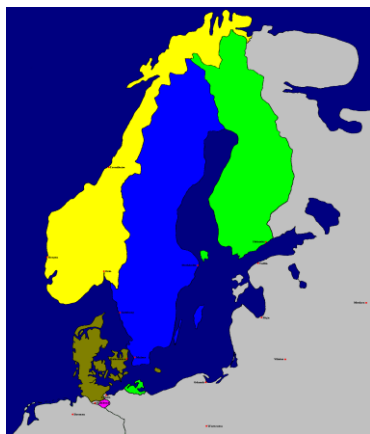
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2020



Open source paper in; Drug and alcohol dependence, 2020

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7500397/pdf/main.pdf>

- ✓ **COVID-19 survey among people who use drugs in three cities in Norway**
- ***Welle-Strand et al, Drug and alcohol dependence; 2020***

Background

- ✓ Concern regarding the risk of COVID-19 among persons who use drugs (PWUDs)

- ✓ Norway
 - 5 million inhabitants
 - The society was partly closed down 12 March 2020 due to COVID-19
 - From 20 April 2020 – gradual reopening of society
 - Few PWUDs were diagnosed with COVID-19 during early phase of the pandemic

- ✓ We examined the respondents’
 - knowledge of/and present COVID-19 symptoms
 - willingness to take COVID-19 test if experiencing symptoms
 - knowledge of services available for COVID-19 positive PWUDs
 - drug availability and prices of drugs

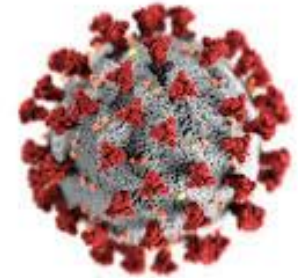


Methods

- ✓ We recruited 226 PWUDs from May 13 – June 30 in Oslo, Bergen and Kristiansand in a cross-sectional study
- ✓ Interview-administered questionnaire (3 – 5 minutes)
- ✓ Included intervention – if respondents didn't know symptoms and/or services available – INFORM THEM
- ✓ Interviewers: Peers and professionals at low-threshold services



Results



Background characteristics (n=226)

- 73 % male, mean age 44.1 years
- 54.9 % in opioid maintenance treatment (OMT)
- Drug use: Cocaine/amphetamine 61.0 %, cannabis 59.7 %, heroin/other opioids 54.8 %, tranquilizers 52.6 %, alcohol 33.2 %

COVID-19 questions

- 65.9 % were familiar with COVID-19 symptoms
- Present symptoms: 19.9 % body pain/aches, shortness of breath 16.8 %, cough 12.4 %
- 91.2 % reported willingness to test if they experienced COVID-19 related symptoms
- 63.7 % were not aware of specially designed COVID-19 services available for PWUDs needing isolation

Results cont.

35.4 % reported a current drug shortage

- Of those: 31.3 % for tranquilizers and 7.5 % for cannabis

61.5 % reported an increase in drug prices

- 69.8 % of those reported this for cannabis

Those in OMT had

- Higher odds of being familiar with COVID-19 symptoms (aOR 3.4, 95 % CI 1.7, 6.8)
- Higher odds of being aware of services available to COVID-19 positive PWUDs (aOR 2.7, 95 % CI 1.1, 6.3)

Conclusion/take home message

- ✓ OMT (=drug treatment) may play an important role in COVID-19 prevention
- ✓ A special effort is needed to reach PWUDs not in treatment
- ✓ More information is needed among PWUDs about the symptoms of COVID-19
- ✓ Important to ensure information about test availability, easy access to test facilities and proper care of those testing positive
- ✓ There is a clear need for tailored messaging specifically towards vulnerable groups