

The Use of the Current Network of Pharmacies for Low-Threshold Public Health Interventions as Part of Addiction Treatment Services: Possible Benefits and Limitations



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BACKGROUND: *Injecting drug users (IDUs) show a high level of risky behaviour and pose a potentially dangerous source for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases. The IDU population represents a very significant target group for appropriate public health interventions. Pharmacies and their more intensive involvement in the system of the prevention of infectious and other diseases, as well as their contribution to the increased compliance of drug users in treatment, are currently pressing issues.*

AIMS: *To propose and introduce recommendations intended to support the implementation of additional services for injecting drug users in Czech pharmacies.*

DESIGN AND MEASUREMENTS: *Content analysis of qualitative data based on the identification of patterns and/or topics, as well as on narrative discourse, with the subsequent use of data validity control techniques.*

SAMPLE: *The results of substudies of the project “The Role of Pharmacies in the System of Health Care and Counselling for (Injecting) Drug Users in the Czech Republic”, direct responses of participant pharmacists, and the related literature on the issue.*

RESULTS: *Recommendations for and specification of possible roles of pharmacists and pharmacies in the Czech Republic in relation to IDUs are introduced. In particular, possibilities for pharmacists’ involvement (in pharmacies) in the prevention of substance use from the health care perspective, the target group for addiction treatment interventions in pharmacies, and possible procedures, protocols, and strategies to be pursued in pharmacies are suggested. Other issues, such as the dispensation/exchange of injecting equipment in pharmacies, substitution treatment in pharmacies, the nature of addiction treatment services, and the system of data collection in pharmacies are also discussed. In addition, preliminary draft recommendations for the implementation and follow-up on specific addiction treatment services provided in pharmacies.*

CONCLUSIONS: *Pharmacies and pharmacists represent a promising, and very important and effective, link which, if set up adequately, can be a significant contribution to the public health approach to the care of injecting drug users in the Czech Republic.*

KEY WORDS: PHARMACIES – PHARMACIST – PUBLIC HEALTH – INJECTING DRUG USE – INFECTIOUS DISEASE – SYRINGES

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