

INJECTING DRUGS ON AND OFF: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH STOPPING INJECTION DRUG USE AMONG YOUNG PWID

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Background: We need a better understanding of how young people who inject drugs (YPWID) manage their injection drug use (IDU) over time. It is often assumed they stop IDU only after drug treatment. In this study, we explore factors associated stopping IDU over a 12-month follow-up period.

Methods: 169 participants were recruited for a clinical trial evaluating an HCV-prevention intervention. Eligibility criteria included: age 18-29; current opioid use; recent IDU (at least once in past 6 months); and HCV and HIV antibody negative. Participants were interviewed at baseline and 4 follow-up periods (3, 6, 9 and 12 months). Participants' sociodemographics, drug use, injection practices and drug treatment utilization were assessed. This analysis is based on 108 participants (64%) who completed at least 3 follow-up assessments. Associations were assessed with Chi square, Fisher's exact tests, and t-tests.

Results: Participants (mean age =25) first injected drugs at age 20.6 (SD: 3.1). 29% were female; 28% Latinx, 60% Non-Hispanic White, 4% Non-Hispanic Black or Multiracial. At baseline, 25% were currently homeless and 90% met criteria for severe OUD. 41% reported stopping IDU for at least 3 months during the 12-month follow-up period. Stopping IDU injection (versus not stopping) was significantly associated with stopping opioid use; more months not sharing cookers (9.8 vs 8.4); fewer average days of IDU per month (5.1 vs 18.7); and fewer average injections per day (1.5 vs 3.15). Stopping IDU was not associated with drug treatment utilization (MOUD or behavioral) or trial condition (intervention vs. control).

Conclusion: A significant percentage (41%) of YPWID reported stopping IDU for 3 or more months during a 12-month period, most without utilizing drug treatment. We need to better understand how YPWID achieve and sustain IDU cessation, how to facilitate this self-initiated behavior change, and if and how drug treatment could help.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No conflicts of interest to disclose