Background

• Skin and soft tissue infections are common in people who inject drugs
• Can be life-threatening if untreated. Potential complications:
  • Endocarditis
  • Sepsis
  • Amputations
• Negatively affect quality of life:
  • Painful
  • Odour
  • Stigma and discrimination when accessing care
• Cleaning injecting sites with alcohol swabs may reduce skin and soft tissue infections
• Are there opportunities to increase swab use?

Results

Of 853 people who inject drugs (67% male and median age 42 years):

- 28% never or almost never swabbed prior to injecting
- 26% did not swab prior to last injection

Older participants were more likely to swab

Less likely to swab:
  - Injecting crystal methamphetamine
  - Sharing needle/syringes
  - Reusing own needle/syringes

Among people who did not swab at last injection (n=222):

- Few specific reasons identified for not using swabs

Simply not seen as an important part of the injecting routine

A small number of participants reported swab use was painful or harmful

Discussion

• Regular swabbing of injecting sites was reported by the majority of people who inject drugs
• But opportunities do exist to increase swab use and reduce skin and soft-tissue infections:
  • May usefully target younger people who inject drugs, and those who inject crystal methamphetamine
• NSP workers ideally placed to promote good injecting hygiene:
  • Focusing on injecting hygiene encourages a holistic approach to the health of people who inject drugs
  • Supporting injecting hygiene likely to have highly salient impacts on clients’ vein and skin health – good outcome for clients and workers!
• Need to better understand why swabbing may be viewed as harmful

Aims

• Determine proportion of people who inject drugs who routinely swab injecting sites prior to injecting
• Identify correlates of non-swabbing
• Explore reasons for non-swabbing

Methods

• Cross-sectional survey of sentinel populations of people who inject drugs living in Australian capital cities
• Structured interview on drug use and related outcomes
• Logistic regression to identify correlates of non-swabbing

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