

Needle and Syringe Programs in NSW: Opportunities for Innovation

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Background/Purpose:

Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) are the single most important and cost-effective strategy in reducing drug-related harms and preventing blood-borne virus (BBV) transmission among people who inject drugs (PWID), however, funding commitments have stagnated, national spending on harm reduction initiatives has decreased, and community needs are evolving.

There are several policy deficits in NSW that have impeded progress for NSPs in NSW. This paper uses ACON's NSP as a case study combined with a review of contemporary research to outline the policy case for renewed funding commitments to capitalise on the success of NSPs.

Approach:

This presentation provides an overview of ACON's NSP, the policy context in NSW, and reviews current literature on the role of NSPs in BBV prevention and the impact of stigma. The paper will discuss rates of BBV transmission among PWID, the role of peers in NSPs, stigma and discrimination, barriers to accessing NSPs especially among marginalised populations, and the impact of COVID-19. The paper highlights the strengths of the NSP model while also outlining the case for innovation and policy change.

Outcomes/Impact:

The presentation will make seven core recommendations for ways to innovate NSP policy in NSW to ensure continued success in the prevention of BBV transmission. These recommendations centre around opportunities for funding, changes to access models and equipment, the role of peers in reducing stigma, and implementing recommendations from the NSW Ice Inquiry.

Innovation and Significance:

To achieve our stated goals for the elimination of BBV transmission and reductions in experiences of stigma and discrimination, it is critical that all avenues are explored to minimise harm experienced by PWID.

This paper combines research and practice to make policy recommendations for NSP innovation.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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