

ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN ATHENS, GREECE (2018-2019)

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Background:

Estimates for the population size of people who inject drugs (PWID) are essential to assess the burden of infectious diseases and the coverage of harm reduction programs. In Greece, existing estimates are based on capture-recapture methodology applied annually to three drug treatment sources (estimated population size: 1,487 current PWID in Athens in 2018). We aim to provide revised estimates for the population of PWID in Athens based on data from a community-based program.

Methods:

A program was implemented in Athens between 2018-2020 with the aim to increase diagnosis and treatment for HCV/HIV among PWID (ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV program). Participants were recruited through peer-driven chain-referral sampling. The program was implemented in two rounds (Round A: April 2018-February 2019, Round B: August 2019-February 2020). The Lincoln-Petersen estimator was used to estimate the population size of current PWID in Athens based on the two-sources capture-recapture data.

Results:

In total, 1,635 unique PWID were recruited to ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV; 1224 (75.1%) reported injecting in the last 30 days. The capture-recapture estimate of the number of current PWID in Athens is 2,150 for the period 2018-2019 (95%CI: 1,946–2,353). Based on this number, the prevalence of injecting drug use in the past 30 days in Athens metropolitan area is 0.087% (95%CI: 0.078–0.095).

Conclusion:

The estimate of the population size of PWID in Athens based on a community-based program is approximately 50% higher than the existing estimate based on drug treatment sources. This has implications concerning the estimated coverage of harm reduction programmes.

Disclosure of interest statement:

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