

Characteristics of Indigenous clients who accessed alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia

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Introduction and aims:

The *Alcohol and other drugs treatment services national minimum data set* (AODTS NMDS) has shown that Indigenous clients are over-represented in the cohort of clients who have accessed publicly-funded alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services in Australia. We aim to explore the characteristics (demographic, service use and service outcome) of Indigenous clients in this cohort and make comparisons with non-Indigenous counterparts where appropriate.

Design and Methods:

Using the AODTS NMDS, a unit record dataset of AOD treatment clients was created and analysed to highlight the characteristics of Indigenous clients.

Key Findings:

In 2016–17, 15% of clients who accessed an AOD treatment service were Indigenous Australians. This equates to a rate of 3,313 Indigenous clients per 100,000 population, 6.5 times that of non-Indigenous counterparts (507 clients per 100,000 population). Comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients are made with respect to various demographic, service use and service outcomes variables. Differences in characteristics over time are also presented.

Discussions and Conclusions:

These findings highlight the characteristics of Indigenous clients who accessed AOD treatment services and provide comparisons to non-Indigenous counterparts. Importantly, the AODTS NMDS does not include all publicly-funded Indigenous substance use services and Indigenous primary health care services, indicating a potential under-representation of Indigenous clients.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

These findings add to the AOD treatment knowledge landscape and informs Australian AOD treatment responses and program initiatives.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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