

ARUD PEER PROJECT

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Background:

The Project was established in 2017 to improve hepatitis C care for drug users. To this end, former hepatitis patients who had personal experience with substances were recruited. The peers proved to be effective in counseling drug users and persuading them to enter therapy. In the pandemic, they were a helpful support and able to use their good contacts to effectively recruit subjects for a Corona study.

Description of model of care/intervention:

To further leverage drug users' trust in peers, the project is expanded to include support in the areas of dental health, gynecology and sexual health. Additional female peers with experience in motherhood were brought in and trained in the new areas. Peers distribute helpful gifts to their target audience in exchange for participating in a small survey. In the area of dental health, for example, a tooth-cleaning set with dental care gum and dental floss sticks, as well as information on how to find medical care for dental problems.

The data that peers collect provides helpful information about the needs of the target population and how outreach can be expanded and improved.

Effectiveness:

The peers enjoy extensive training in their areas of operation and can refer questions to a professional at any time. In the case of sexual health and gynecology, they are supported and instructed by a senior physician in female health and internal medicine. Since most peers had experiences with substance use and have a risk of unwanted relapses, they get support like team supervisions and individual therapeutic sessions if necessary.

Conclusion and next steps:

Peers have become firmly established in the facility and their work is appreciated by patients and professionals. They can be quickly deployed in new areas of need and will expand their work to other institutions in the field of addiction.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.