

COVID-19 Impact on Drug Health Australian Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Patients

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AIM: People affected by Substance Use Disorders (SUD's) may experience loneliness, denial, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and despair, which may lower treatment adherence. Some may have an increased risk of overdose, injecting drug use, aggression, and suicide. Social isolation can lead to anxiety and other mental health issues due to uncertainty about health status.¹

COVID-19 has the potential to impact Drug Health Australian Indigenous and Non-Indigenous patients' health and so has significant implications for client outcomes. We aimed to assess the impacts of the pandemic on Drug Health clients by monitoring the Emergency Department (ED) admissions and health care services utilization before and during the pandemic.

METHOD: Western Sydney Local Health District Australian Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Patients Emergency Department Admission data were analyzed using Excel and Prism programs. Before COVID-19 and during COVID-19 Drug Health patients' ED admission numbers, demographic data, ED admission diagnosis were compared. WSLHD Ethics Approval was obtained.

RESULTS

Australian Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Drug Health patients ED admission increased by 27% and general population ED admission decreased by 17% ($p = 0.0001$) during the pandemic. Drug-related ED admission increased significantly in total Australian Non-Indigenous Drug health patients and Non-Indigenous Male Drug

¹The pandemic may fuel the next wave of the opioid crisis

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/coronavirus-pandemic-may-fuel-the-next-wave-of-the-opioid-crisis>

Health patients (p 0.005, p 0.001) respectively. Infection-related ED admission increased significantly (p 0.045) in Australian Male Drug health patients.

CONCLUSIONS: The COVID-19 pandemic was associated with increased admissions and treatment of drug health clients. Tailored prevention programs are required to address the specific needs of these clients.

Disclosure of interest: None to disclose.