

Substance use among young people in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

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Abstract:

Introduction: Substance use by young people is a global health priority, and impacts on sustainable development goals. This presentation reviews available data on the use of alcohol (including kava), tobacco, cannabis, ATS, Heroin and IDU among young people in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

Method: Data came from peer- and non-reviewed, published and unpublished literature, websites and key informant interviews.

Findings: Despite the limitations of much data, concerning trends emerged with regards to levels of alcohol, cannabis and ATS use, and injecting drug use (IDU). Levels reported in many PICTs far exceeded those for Australia and New Zealand. The specific needs of young people are recognized, but remain largely unmet.

Implications for policy and practice: There is a need to: Improve data collection via routine surveys to discern trends and emerging difficulties of young people in and out of school, and especially most at risk adolescents. Development of a facilitating policy and practice environment, focused on health and not criminalisation. Trial evidence-informed prevention and treatment, especially brief and non-residential interventions including those attending to mental health concerns and which involve families and the community. Build the capacity of both generalist and specific workforces to meet the multiple and complex needs of young substance users in youth friendly settings. Explore diverse sites for prevention and screening activities such as schools, dormitories and other out-of-home accommodation used by students, workplaces that employ young workers, and other sites such as seafarer/marine colleges.

Themes: Cross cultural and international, Adolescents and youth

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