

A proximity harm reduction approach to improve HCV treatment adherence



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BACKGROUND

Ares do Pinhal is a Portuguese NGO responsible for the Low Threshold Methadone Program (LTMMMP) of Lisbon, a harm reduction program based on mobile units for medical care and psychosocial support that reaches about 1200 drug users in a daily basis

The aims of the LTMMMP are:

- 1) raise awareness among users for safe consumption and safe sexual habits;
- 2) improve access to health and social services within the community network;
- 3) provide access to dignified living conditions to users most excluded from society;
- 4) provide guidance to more structured treatment programs.

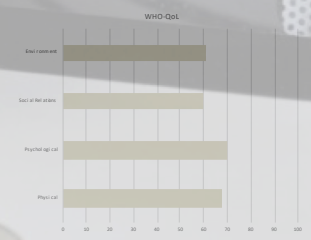
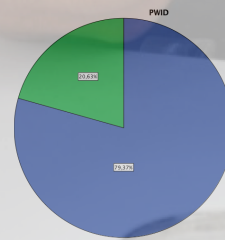
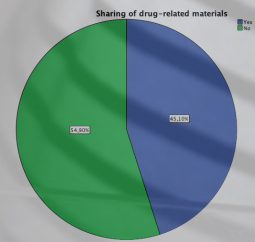
The target population of the institution includes mostly polysubstance users with risk behaviours, along with physical and mental comorbidities and away from social support and health structures.

This population comprise a risk population of hepatitis C virus (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

EFFECTIVENESS

Last year, 210 HCV clinical appointments were scheduled. From those, 87 were conducted in a hospital setting, but 24 patients were excluded due to different reasons (e.g. dropout, undetectable HCV RNA).

Participants: 63 participants (48 men, 15 women) mean age 48yrs (min 34 – max 65yrs), 59% are unemployed, and 30% are homeless,.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

- These data reports on an ongoing research which aims to identify the main barriers for treatment, but also understand whether patients improve psychological adjustment following HCV treatment.
- The data from pre-treatment assessment suggest that patients are motivated for treatment, but that quality of life is still below the normative data.
- We expect improvements at the post-treatment assessment in psychological adjustment and quality of life.
- Overall, these data highlight the relevance of harm reduction approaches in reaching PWID for HCV treatment while minimising health risks for patients and society.