

## EDUCATION ON ADDICTION MEDICINE IN THE BASIC HEALTH CARE TRAINING: THE EXPERIENCE OF SWITZERLAND

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### Introduction

People who inject drugs (PWID) are a population that has been historically disadvantaged in term of limited access to medical care and poor health condition. For instance, PWID are hardly to profit of regular medical assessment, despite high prevalence of comorbidities, such as HIV and hepatitis infections, liver disease and others. The use of substances can create medical consequences and can be the reason for medical visits, hospital admissions and hospitalization. The feedback from PWID and caregivers is unfortunately unsatisfactory. Caregivers report difficulties in managing addiction in primary care settings, while patients often feel their needs are not appropriately recognized and are treated inadequately. On the other hand, there is evidence that medical care can be effectively delivered by appropriately trained caregivers. Unfortunately, basic health education for medical doctors, nurses and other caregivers usually does not include a training on addiction. As a consequence, most health professionals lack in skills in the management and treatment of PWID.

### Effectiveness

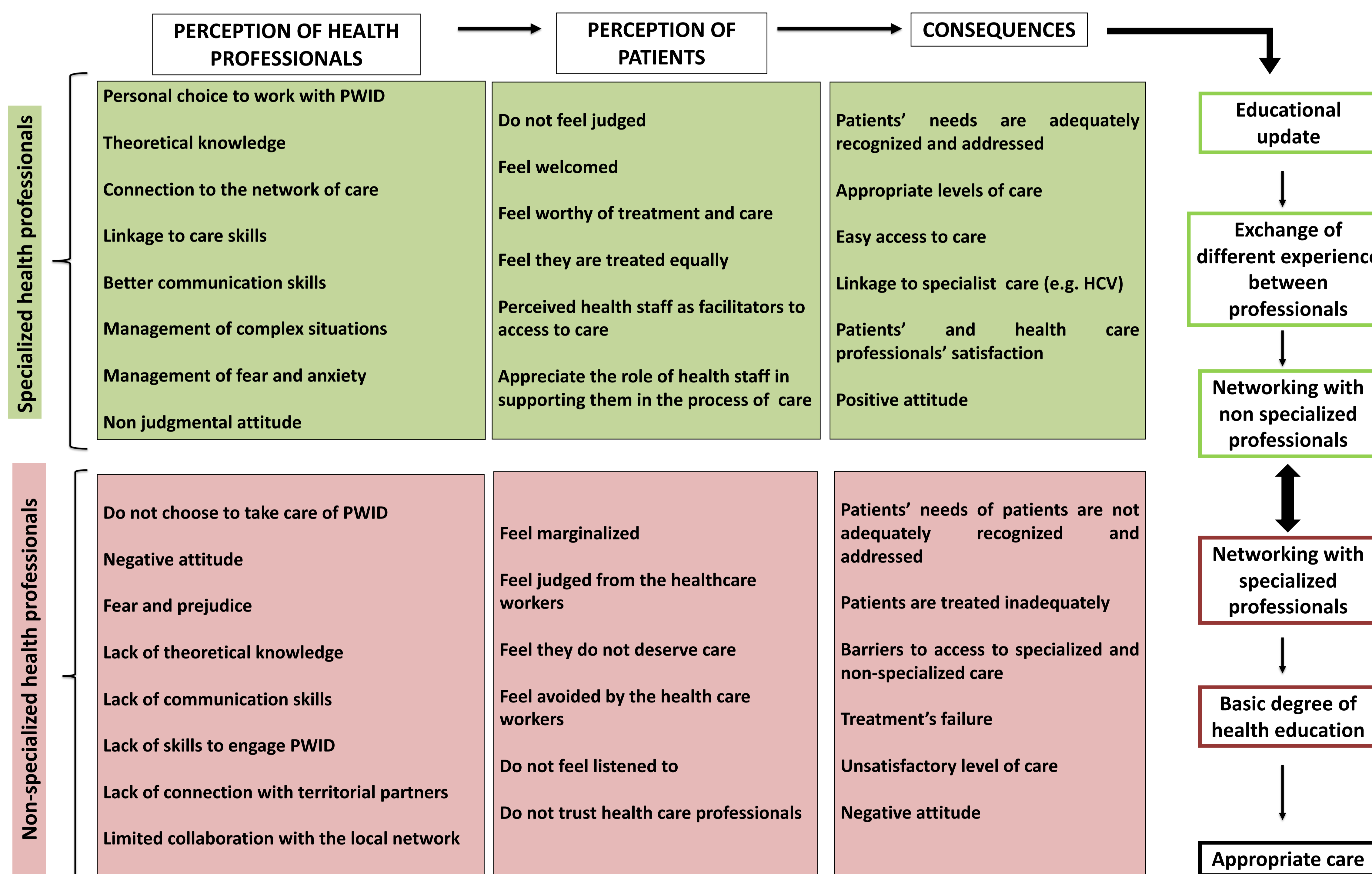
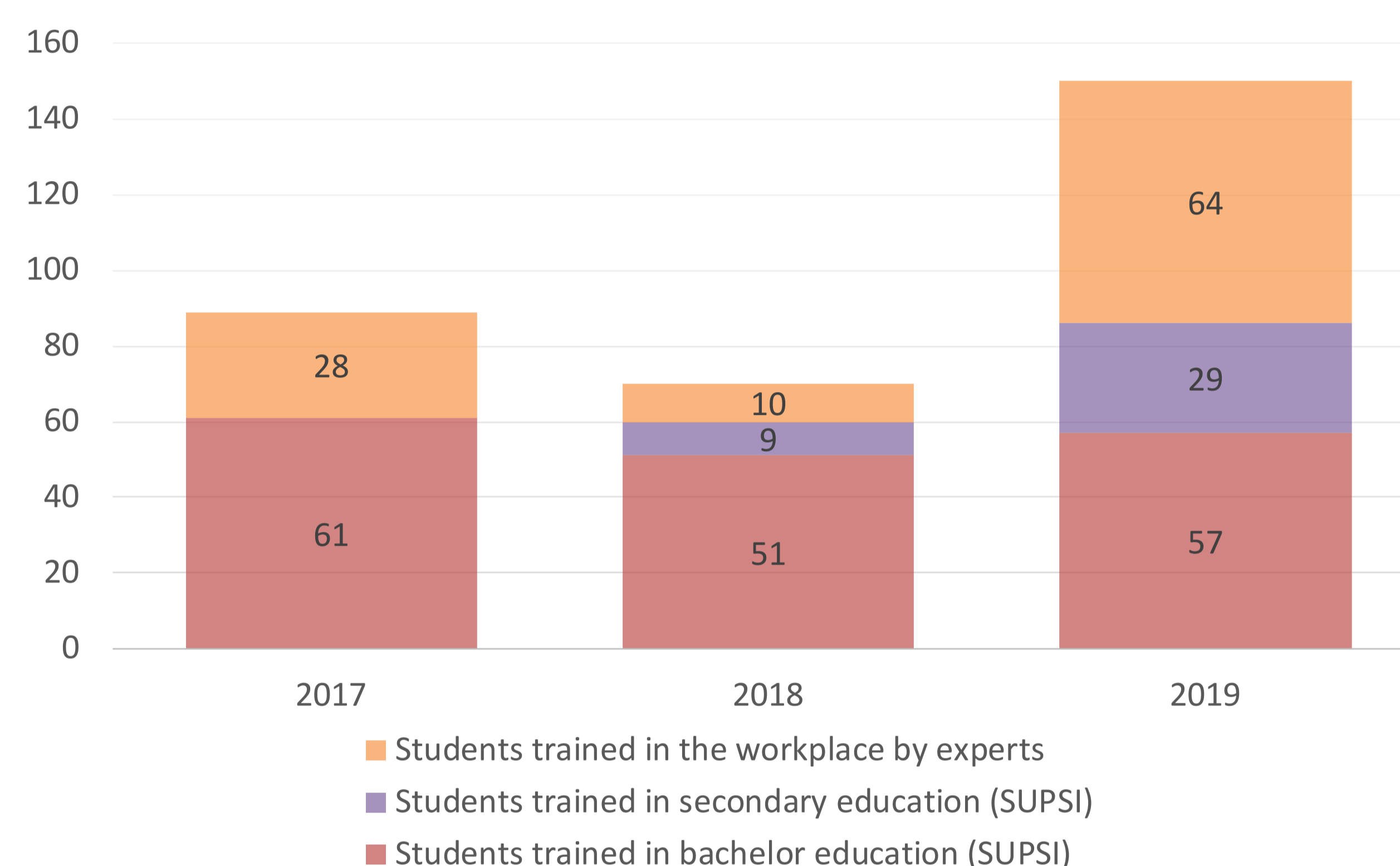
After receiving specific education on addiction, nursing students reported to be more confident with the idea of managing and treating patients with active or former drug user and to be able to plan appropriate treatment programs, with the aim of ameliorating care, reducing stigma and marginalization of PWID and improving patients' care experience. They also recognized the importance of working on reducing the discomfort of health staff.

### Description of model of care/intervention

Both the training program offered in the bachelor's degree and the secondary education in nursing care at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana - SUPSI) were evaluated. Theoretical contents on addiction were already part of the program, but no focus on the management of outpatients and inpatients was developed. Following the feedback from health professionals coming from different settings and through a strong partnership between territorial partners and the SUPSI, it was recognized the need to improve health professionals' education on the management of PWID.

It was therefore proposed to include in the Bachelor of Nursing Science specific contents on the practical care of addiction. Practically, lessons on the management of treatment barriers, on the management medical consequence of drug and alcohol use (as hepatitis C and liver disease), on harm reduction, on peer-to-peer experience were introduced in the educational module in addiction. For some specific topics foreign partners were invited to give lectures.

### NURSES TRAINED IN ADDICTION IN TICINO, SWITZERLAND



### Conclusion and next steps:

Our experience confirms the evidence of literature, showing a lack of knowledge in term of management of addiction in many health settings. To ensure optimal health care of patients with addiction, it is important to give the proper education to primary health staff, without focusing only to specialized figures. Health education in the management of addiction promotes a better attitude of health professional in relationship to PWID. On the same basis, it would be worth considering the possibility to introduce specific contents about the management of addiction in the educational programs of medical doctors.

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