

Patterns of mental health and alcohol and other drug service use after attending emergency department with an amphetamine-related presentation

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Introduction and Aims: Health service use among people who use (meth)amphetamine is high and presents challenges to health services in regional areas. To identify opportunities for improved linkage between local services, this study examines the utilisation of emergency department (ED), mental health (MH) and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services in a Local Health District serving metropolitan and regional areas in the 24-months following a first amphetamine-related ED presentation.

Design and Methods: Routine health data collections in the Illawarra Health Information Platform were used to identify a cohort of N=612 people with a first amphetamine-related ED presentation between 2014 and 2017. ED, MH and AOD service contacts in the subsequent 24-months were identified, using linked Admitted Patient, ED, Non-Admitted Patient and Mental Health Ambulatory data.

Results: Larger proportions of those in regional (vs. metropolitan) areas had 2+ amphetamine-related ED presentations in the 24-months following index presentation ($p < 0.005$). 71.1% of the cohort received community-based mental health follow-up care while 57.0% received AOD services. Among those who received AOD services ($n=349$), 43.0% attended counselling, 42.4% Stimulant Treatment Program and 14.6% Opioid Treatment Program. Those in contact with MH services in the 12-months prior to index were more likely to attend a subsequent AOD service (OR=1.60, 95% CI 1.16-2.21).

Discussion and Conclusions: High levels of MH and AOD service use indicate potential for improved patient and health systems outcomes regarding comorbidity. A more detailed understanding of the attributes of those missing out, and facilitators and barriers to engagement and service use, is needed.

Implications for Policy and Practice: Understanding points of contact is the first step in developing person-centred, complexity capable and integrated care in the region.

Declaration of Interests: This study was funded by the National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED) funded by Commonwealth Department of Health. Authors SA, SQ and DR are employed by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District.