

FROM ANALYSIS TO SOCIAL INNOVATION. THE AGING PROCESS OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN OPIOID SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT: DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE CARE SCENARIOS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR SOCIAL AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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Background:

The number of people who use drugs (PWUD) in opioid substitution treatment (OST) aged more than 50 (50+) has increased of 400% in Switzerland in the last 15 years. Despite the growing size of this population, its specificities are little known. This is unfortunate since these patients are a major challenge for social and health institutions: they cumulate physical, psychological and social problems that generate specific needs which are difficult to treat in traditional care settings. As a result, these patients are in a “no man’s land” between the institutional network for PWUD, on the one hand, and the institutional network for elderly people, on the other hand. To address this problem, we have planned an interdisciplinary and participatory research project in Southern Switzerland to generate new knowledge on the aging process of PWUD in OST and to implement this knowledge in the drug care system.

Approach:

The 2 years research project is based on 4 steps: 1) an epidemiological analysis based on cohort data to describe the social and health conditions of PWUD 50+ in OST and to estimate their lifespan; 2) a sociological qualitative study to analyze life’s trajectories and lifestyles of PWUD 50+ in OST ; 3) an organizational study to explore the strategies of social and health professionals to face PWUD 50+ in OST; 4) an open discussion on results of step 1, 2 and 3 in focus groups with social and health professionals with different profiles to develop innovative and grounded care scenarios and training programs.

Outcome:

In September 2018 we plan to be able to present preliminary epidemiological data and the study concept of the subsequent qualitative analysis and organizational phase.

Conclusion:

We describe an interdisciplinary and participatory research approach that aims to generate innovative models of intervention in the drug care system.

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