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GREY LITERATURE

Inequitable marijuana criminalization, COVID-19, and socioeconomic disparities: the case for community reinvestment in New York

Drug Policy Alliance
New York, NY: 2021

This report shows deep racial disparities and economic impacts in marijuana arrests across the state of New York. Four specific case studies document how, despite regional differences, people of color in New York City, New Rochelle, Syracuse, and Buffalo are consistently over-represented in marijuana arrests, and areas with the highest marijuana arrest rates also tend to have proportionally larger populations of color, according to the report. Across all cities, there were also higher COVID-19 positivity rates among the high marijuana arrest zip codes compared to the low marijuana arrest zip codes.

http://smart-ny.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/DPA_PSP_Marijuana_Disparities_COVID_3.16.2021.pdf

The influence of trait compulsivity and impulsivity on addictive and compulsive behaviors during COVID-19

Albertella L, Rotaru K, Christensen E, et al
Frontiers in Psychiatry, 2021, 12, 634583

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in high levels of psychological distress worldwide, with experts expressing concern that this could result in corresponding increases in addictive behaviors as individuals seek to cope with their distress. Further, some individuals may be at greater risk than others for developing problematic addictive behaviors during times of high stress, such as individuals with high trait impulsivity and compulsivity. Despite the potential of such knowledge to inform early detection of risk, no study to date has examined the influence of trait impulsivity and compulsivity on addictive behaviors during COVID-19. Toward this aim, the current study examined the association between impulsive and compulsive traits and problematic addictive and compulsive behaviors during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Australia.

Methods:

Eight hundred seventy-eight adults completed a cross-sectional online survey during the first lockdown, between late May to June 2020. Participants completed scales for addictive and compulsive behaviors for the period prior to and during lockdown for problematic eating, pornography, internet use, gambling, drinking, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Negative binomial regressions examined the associations between impulsivity, compulsivity, and their interaction with problematic behaviors during lockdown, controlling for age, gender, sample, psychological distress, exposure to COVID-related stressors, and pre-COVID problems.

Results:

Greater trait compulsivity was associated with more problematic obsessive-compulsive behaviors ($p < 0.001$) and less problematic drinking ($p = 0.038$) during lockdown. Further, trait compulsivity interacted with trait impulsivity in relation to problematic eating behaviors ($p = 0.014$) such that greater trait compulsivity was associated with more problems among individuals with low impulsivity only ($p = 0.030$). Finally, psychological distress and/or exposure to COVID-related stressors were associated with greater problems across all addictive and compulsive behaviors, as was severity of pre-COVID problems.

Discussion:

Trait compulsivity was associated with addictive and compulsive behaviors in different ways. Further, the finding that stress-related variables (psychological distress and COVID-related stressors) were associated with greater problems across all lockdown behaviors supports the idea that stress may facilitate, or otherwise be associated with, problematic behaviors. These findings highlight the need for interventions that enhance resilience to stress, which in turn may reduce risk for addictive and compulsive disorders.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7940765/pdf/fpsy-12-634583.pdf>

A rare case of methamphetamine-induced lung injury during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

Javed, A, Nasrullah, A, Malik, K
Cureus, 2021, 13, 2, e13215

Methamphetamine-induced lung injury is a very rare entity and is poorly understood due to the paucity of available literature. It can present with respiratory failure, often requiring immediate ventilatory support and conservative management. Secondary bacterial infection can result from smoking contaminated crystalline methamphetamine. Although there is growing evidence for the use of steroids in acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), the literature is limited regarding cases of non-cardiogenic pulmonary edema due to meth use. We present a case of ARDS due to methamphetamine use, which dramatically resolved with ventilatory support. A low threshold to investigate drug-induced lung injury in suspicious cases can limit unnecessary utilization of resources during the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccination among people who inject drugs: Leaving no one behind

Iversen, J; Maher, L
Drug and Alcohol Review
1 March 2021

DOI: 10.1111/dar.13273

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/dar.13273>

Technology-assisted methadone take-home dosing for dispensing methadone to persons with opioid use disorder during the Covid-19 pandemic

Dunn, K E; Brooner, R K; Stoller, K B

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 2021, 121, 108197

Introduction:

Covid-19 confers substantial risk for the >400,000 patients who receive methadone for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) and methods for safely dispensing large quantities of methadone to patients are lacking.

Methods:

This study evaluated the MedMinder “Jon”, an electronic and cellular-enabled pillbox that provides real-time monitoring to remotely manage take-home doses of methadone using a 12-week, within-subject, Phase II (NCT03254043) trial. We transitioned all participants from liquid to tablet methadone one week prior to randomization. Participants completed both treatment-as-usual and electronic pillbox conditions before choosing a condition in a final “choice phase”. We assessed feasibility, satisfaction, and safety outcomes during the exit interview.

Results:

Overall, we randomized 25 participants, 24 (96.0%) completed >1 study session, and 21 (84.0%) completed the exit interview. We dispensed 167.92 g (1,974 doses) of methadone. Participants would use the pillbox again (86.3%) and recommend it to others (95.4%). Overall, 52.4% selected the pillbox in the choice condition and those who did not cited issues related to study requirements. Less than 1% of pillbox alerts were for medication being consumed outside the dosing window and we observed no evidence of actual or attempted methadone diversion.

Discussion:

We were able to adequately manage patients who would not otherwise qualify for large quantities of take-home methadone when we dispensed methadone tablets via a secure pillbox. The integration of a commercially available pillbox into routine clinic operations increases opportunity for dispensing medication. Our data support remote monitoring of methadone take-home doses and may inform clinic practices related to Covid-19.

Mobile van delivery of extended-release buprenorphine and extended-release naltrexone for youth with OUD: An adaptation to the COVID-19 emergency

Wenzel, K; Fishman, M

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 2021, 120, 108149

The Youth Opioid Recovery Support (YORS) intervention is a novel treatment for young adults with opioid use disorder (OUD) that uses developmentally informed strategies to reduce barriers to treatment engagement. YORS strategies, such as home delivery of extended-release buprenorphine and extended-release naltrexone for OUD, are designed to increase engagement in treatment, but with the COVID-19 pandemic these strategies increase risk of virus exposure and spread to patients and staff entering homes. We present mobile van service delivery as a potential solution to continuing to provide low-barrier care for young adults with OUD while reducing risk associated with COVID-19. Initial feedback from patients and staff is positive and lays the groundwork to test feasibility and acceptability of this intervention rigorously in future work. Mobile van delivery of extended-release medications for OUD may be a promising treatment modification for mitigating risk of COVID-19, as well as a useful option for ongoing enhancement of care.

Harm reduction for adolescents and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case study of Community Care in Reach

Noyes, E; Yeo, E; Yerton, M; et al

Public Health Reports

5 March 2021

DOI: 10.1177/0033354921999396

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has challenged the ability of harm reduction programs to provide vital services to adolescents, young adults, and people who use drugs, thereby increasing the risk of overdose, infection, withdrawal, and other complications of drug use. To evaluate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on harm reduction services for adolescents and young adults in Boston, we conducted a quantitative assessment of the Community Care in Reach (CCIR) youth pilot program to determine gaps in services created by its closure during the peak of the pandemic (March 19–June 21, 2020). We also conducted semistructured interviews with staff members at 6 harm reduction programs in Boston from April 27 through May 4, 2020, to identify gaps in harm reduction services, changes in substance use practices and patterns of engagement with people who use drugs, and how harm reduction programs adapted to pandemic conditions. During

the pandemic, harm reduction programs struggled to maintain staffing, supplies, infection control measures, and regular connection with their participants. During the 3-month suspension of CCIR mobile van services, CCIR missed an estimated 363 contacts, 169 units of naloxone distributed, and 402 syringes distributed. Based on our findings, we propose the following recommendations for sustaining harm reduction services during times of crisis: pursuing high-level policy changes to eliminate political barriers to care and fund harm reduction efforts; enabling and empowering harm reduction programs to innovatively and safely distribute vital resources and build community during a crisis; and providing comprehensive support to people to minimize drug-related harms.

Commentary: Stronger together: the role of a rural community of practice in implementing a culturally relevant response to the opioid epidemic during the COVID-19 pandemic

Burggraf, C; Courser, M W

Family & Community Health

17 March 2021

DOI: 10.1097/FCH.0000000000000299

Home delivery of legal intoxicants in the age of COVID-19

Matthay, E C; Schmidt, L A

Addiction

116, 4, p.691-693, 2021

Addiction and behavioral health care workers should have access to Covid-19 testing and vaccines

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/03/15/addiction-behavioral-health-care-workers-should-have-access-to-covid-19-testing-and-vaccines/>

Obesity, drug abuse and depression in Flanders increased during coronavirus crisis

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/news/belgium-all-news/health/159988/obesity-drug-abuse-and-depression-in-flanders-increased-during-coronavirus-crisis-general-practitioners-pandemic-lockdown-kul-intego/>

Covid-19's big public health lesson: Ask people to be careful, not perfect

Harm reduction works. Covid-19 has proved it | Vox, USA

<https://www.vox.com/22315478/covid-19-coronavirus-harm-reduction-abstinence>

Substance abuse among pregnant women on the rise during COVID-19

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/pregnancy-substance-use-disorders-during-covid-19-5116371>

'We forget our troubles': crystal meth use rises during lockdown in Zimbabwe

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/mar/16/crystal-meth-mutoriro-drug-use-rises-zimbabwe-lockdown>

The coronavirus pandemic provides an opportunity to address homelessness

As emergency shelters and encampments emerge in cities across North America, the public has been confronted with a more visible homeless population as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, this has led to several crusades aimed to — once again — hide this population from view | The Conversation, Canada

<https://theconversation.com/the-coronavirus-pandemic-provides-an-opportunity-to-address-homelessness-144549>