



EMCDDA DOCUMENTATION CENTRE INFORMATION BULLETIN

CORONAVIRUS, 7 August 2020

GREY LITERATURE

Substance use considerations during #COVID19

World Health Organisation: Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
Cairo: 2020

The current COVID-19 situation has left many people worried and scared. The possibility of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19 infection can be overwhelming and stressful, so can the measures that many countries put in place to limit the spread of the infection (e.g. isolation, quarantines, lockdowns and physical distancing). Under no circumstances should people use any type of substances as a means of preventing or treating COVID-19 infection. Substance use will not protect from COVID-19. Different target groups have a responsibility to steer clear of substance use throughout this pandemic and beyond, and to help others do the same, and get the help they need, in case they are using substances or suffering from substance use disorders.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/333463/Subst-use%20-COVID19-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Researching during a pandemic

We have been working with the Universities of Bristol and Bath to find out how the Coronavirus pandemic has affected the lives of people who inject drugs in Bristol | BDP blog, UK

<https://www.bdp.org.uk/news/researching-during-a-pandemic>

Rapid publication of COVID-19-related addiction science

Board of Directors

International Society of Addiction Journal Editors

August 2020

ISAJE statement on rapid publication of COVID-19-related addiction science

<https://www.isaje.net/rapid-publication-covid-statement.html>

COVID-19, mental health, and opioid use disorder: Old and new public health crises intertwine

Henry, B F; Mandavia, A D; Paschen-Wolff, M M; et al
Psychological Trauma : Theory, Research, Practice and Policy
12, S1, S111-S112, 2020

The United States is facing both the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and an ongoing epidemic of opioid overdose. Opioid use disorder is associated with other mental health problems, trauma, and social and health disparities. While the United States has acted to improve access to treatment for mental health and opioid use, research will be needed to understand the effectiveness of new policies in the context of COVID-19.

Discussing substance use with clients during the COVID-19 pandemic: A motivational interviewing approach

Walker, D D; Jaffe, A E; Pierce, A R; et al
Psychological Trauma : Theory, Research, Practice and Policy
12, S1, S115-S117, 2020

During the COVID-19 pandemic, trauma-exposed individuals may have heightened risk for substance use. Using substances to cope may contribute to the development of problematic substance use over time. It is imperative to initiate conversations about substance use with clients during this time and motivational interviewing offers an ideal framework for doing so.

"The post-COVID era": challenges in the treatment of substance use disorder (SUD) after the pandemic

López-Pelayo, H, Aubin, H J, Drummond, C, et al.
BMC Medicine, 2020, 18, 1, 241

Background:

Citizens affected by substance use disorders are high-risk populations for both SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19-related mortality. Relevant vulnerabilities to COVID-19 in people who suffer substance use disorders are described in previous communications. The COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity to reshape and update addiction treatment networks.

Main body:

Renewed treatment systems should be based on these seven pillars: (1) telemedicine and digital solutions, (2) hospitalization at home, (3) consultation-liaison psychiatric and addiction services, (4) harm-reduction facilities, (5) person-centered care, (6) promote paid work to improve quality of life in people with substance use disorders, and (7) integrated addiction care. The three "best buys" of the World Health Organization (reduce availability, increase prices, and a ban on advertising) are still valid. Additionally, new strategies must be implemented to systematically deal with (a) fake news concerning legal and illegal drugs and (b) controversial scientific information.

Conclusion:

The heroin pandemic four decades ago was the last time that addiction treatment systems were updated in many western countries. A revised and modernized addiction treatment network must include improved access to care, facilitated where appropriate by technology; more integrated care with addiction specialists supporting non-specialists; and reducing the stigma experienced by people with SUDs.

Preliminary findings of the impact of COVID-19 on drugs crypto markets

Bergeron, A; Décary-Héту, D ; Giommoni, L
International Journal of Drug Policy
30 July 2020
DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102870

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented consequences on the world economy. The impact of the pandemic on illicit drug market remains scant. We expose the potential consequences the COVID-19 pandemic could have on the ability of people who use drugs to source their illicit drugs via cryptomarkets.

Methods

We analyzed 262 self-reported submissions of illicit drug transactions on the darkweb. The self-reports include the date of the transaction, the types of illicit drugs bought/sold, and whether the

shipment of the illicit drugs succeeded, had issues (ex. unusually long delivery, an error in the type of drug shipped, quantity or concentration of the drug), or failed.

Results

Between January 1st, 2020 and March 21, 2020, successful deliveries represented 60% to 100% of transactions. Starting on March 21 however, the share of shipments that had issues or failed increased rapidly and represented a majority of all shipments. At the peak of the market disruption, the successful deliveries represented only 21% of all transactions.

Conclusion

Illicit drug transactions on the darkweb were disrupted at the same time as lockdowns were put in place in the United States and in the United Kingdom. While no causation link can be established, the correlation suggests that lockdowns could have disrupted drug cryptomarkets activities. We discuss the market disruption in light of the literature.

COVID-19 pandemic and addiction: Current problems in Iran

Pirnia B, Dezhakam H, Pirnia K, et al.

Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 2020, 54, 102313

Safer opioid distribution in response to the COVID-19

Tyndall, M

International Journal of Drug Policy

27 July 2020

DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102880

COVID-19 has turned the world upside down in a very short period of time. The impact of COVID-19 will disproportionately effect people who are least able to protect themselves and this will include people who use drugs. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic comes at time when North America is in the midst of a protracted overdose epidemic caused by a toxic illegal drug supply. Overdose deaths are likely to rise when people are isolated, social support programs are cut back, and the illicit drug supply is further compromised. Safer opioid distribution in response to a toxic street drug supply is a pragmatic and effective way to reduce overdose deaths. COVID-19 makes such an approach even more urgent and compelling.

Drug use during a pandemic: Convergent risk of novel coronavirus and invasive bacterial and viral infections among people who use drugs

Jacka, B P, Phipps, E, Marshall, B D L

International Journal of Drug Policy

29 July 2020

DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102895

Prisoners with drug use disorders during covid-19 pandemic: Caught between a rock and a hard place

Ghosh, A

Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 2020, 54, 102332

The COVID-19 pandemic and rapid implementation of adolescent and young adult telemedicine: challenges and opportunities for innovation

Barney A., Buckelew S., Mesheriakova V., Raymond-Flesch M.

Journal of Adolescent Health

67, 2, p.164-171, 2020

Purpose: This study describes the rapid implementation of telemedicine within an adolescent and young adult (AYA) medicine clinic in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. While there are no practice guidelines specific to AYA telemedicine, observations made during this implementation can highlight challenges encountered and suggest solutions to some of these challenges. Methods: Over the course of several weeks in March, 2020, the Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Clinic at the University of California San Francisco rapidly replaced most in-person visits with telemedicine visits. This required logistical problem-solving, collaboration of all clinic staff members, and continuous reassessment of clinical practices. This article describes observations made during these processes. Results: Telemedicine visits increased from zero to 97% of patient encounters in one month. The number of visits per month was comparable with that one year prior. While there were limitations to the clinic's ability to carry out health supervision visits, many general health, mental health, reproductive health, eating disorders, and addiction treatment services were implemented via telemedicine. Providers identified creative solutions for challenges that arose to managing general confidentiality issues as well as specific challenges related to mental health,

reproductive health, eating disorders, and addiction care. Opportunities to implement and expand high-quality AYA telemedicine were also identified. Conclusions: The COVID-19 pandemic is leading to widespread telemedicine implementation. While telemedicine seems to be feasible and acceptable for our clinic patients, unanswered questions remain regarding confidentiality, quality of care, and health disparities. Clinical guidelines are also needed to guide best practices for telemedicine in this patient population.

New trends of substance abuse during COVID-19 pandemic: an international perspective

Zaami S., Marinelli E., Vari M.R.

Frontiers in Psychiatry, 2020, 11, 700

Pandemic can worsen odds for people recovering from addiction

Drug use can increase the risks associated with COVID-19 infection, and at the same time, the social and psychological risks of the pandemic can intensify drug use | Medical Xpress, USA
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-07-pandemic-worsen-odds-people-recovering.html>

The pandemic is eating away at the illicit marijuana market

Legal operations have moved quickly to take advantage of the situation, seizing on relaxed rules to expand shopping options in states across the country, including curbside pickups and deliveries | Politico, USA
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/02/pandemic-illicit-marijuana-market-390175>

Why I overdosed during the pandemic, and why I survived

Overdosing and being treated for it during the pandemic was a fucked-up experience. Altogether, it was perhaps the scariest and most emotional week of my life | Filter Magazine, USA
<https://filtermag.org/overdose-coronavirus-survived/>

How COVID-19 is driving risks in the illicit benzodiazepines market

The life conditions imposed by the pandemic are leading many Americans to seek mental health treatment for the first time. As a result, prescribing of many psychiatric medications has risen by double digits in 2020 | Filter Magazine, USA
<https://filtermag.org/coronavirus-benzodiazepines-illicit/>

Hotel homeless helped to address addictions by London-wide health programme

Rough sleepers housed in hotels during Covid-19 are getting support for drug and alcohol addiction issues through a pioneering London-wide project | Turning Point, UK
<https://www.turning-point.co.uk/tp-post/1481786214836-hotel-homeless>