



EMCDDA DOCUMENTATION CENTRE INFORMATION BULLETIN

**CORONAVIRUS, 17 July 2020**

## EVENT

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### **COVID-19 Webinar – Specific challenges for women drug users during COVID Friday 17 July: 13.00-14.00 BST**

The coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown results in specific challenges for women who use drugs. In this webinar we will discuss issues around gender based violence (GBV), homeless women and the HIV outbreak in Glasgow, and supporting women to access sexual and reproductive health needs | SDF, UK

<http://www.sdf.org.uk/event/covid-19-webinar-specific-challenges-for-women-drug-users-during-covid/>

## GREY LITERATURE

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### **Sustainable measures to prevent and address COVID-19 in European prisons**

International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)  
London: 2020

Prisons and detention facilities are high-risk environments for the spread of COVID-19, as overcrowding and physical proximity make it difficult to maintain adequate standards of physical distancing, sanitation, and hygiene.

At the outbreak of the pandemic, many countries across the world, including France, Italy, Ireland and Poland, took urgent measures to reduce prison population as a key prevention strategy.

As European authorities de-escalate lockdowns and establish permanent measures to manage COVID-19 outbreaks in the foreseeable future, they should retain and expand policies aimed at reducing prison populations, as these are both immediately effective, and sustainable in the long term. Efforts to control COVID-19 in communities could fail without sustainable measures to prevent its spread in prisons.

<http://files.idpc.net/library/Advocacy%20note%20-%20COVID%2019%20and%20Prisons%20in%20Europe%20FINAL.pdf>

### **COVID-19, prisons and drug policy - Global scan**

Harm Reduction International  
London: 2020

Detention settings are high-risk environments for the spread of infectious diseases. As such, COVID-19 has posed unprecedented challenges for governments and prison administrations, catalysing the uptake of exceptional measures around the world to decongest prisons.

According to Penal Reform International, over 11 million people are imprisoned around the world. Twenty-one percent are detained for non-violent drug offences, including drug use and possession for personal use, making drug policy a significant driver of incarceration at the global level. The United Nations (UN) has expressed strong and unanimous support for the decriminalisation of possession and use of drugs, including calling on governments promote alternatives to conviction and punishment.

Compared to the general population, people in detention experience higher rates of chronic health problems such as HIV, TB, hepatitis C, diabetes, high blood pressure, as well as substance use and mental health problems. Studies show that access to healthcare in prisons is often limited, and of poorer quality than in the community.

Harm Reduction International monitored prison decongestion measures adopted around the world between March and June 2020 in response to COVID-19, and found evidence of such schemes in 109 countries. We tracked criteria for eligibility and implementation of the measures. Noting that UN experts recommended countries release "those charged for minor and non-violent drug and other offences" in the context of COVID-19, we further focused on how these measures impact on people in prison for drug offences.

[http://files.idpc.net/library/HRI\\_Prison\\_Covid\\_Briefing.pdf](http://files.idpc.net/library/HRI_Prison_Covid_Briefing.pdf)

### **The COVID-19 pandemic must serve as a catalyst for the transformation of outdated and failed drug policies**

Amnesty International  
London: 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic, and government responses to it, are exacerbating existing inequalities that pose particular risks and challenges for people who use drugs worldwide. As activists around the world come together in a Global Day of Action through the Support. Don't Punish campaign and call for the reform of drug policies, Amnesty International joins all these brave human rights defenders raising their voices against the harmful and repressive policies implemented under the so-called "war on drugs".

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL3025082020ENGLISH.pdf>

### **Impact of COVID-19 on drug services in four countries: an evidence brief**

Mongan, D; Galvin, B; Farragher, L; Dunne, M; Nelson, M  
Health Research Board  
Dublin: 2020

This evidence brief examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug services in New South Wales, Scotland, New York State and British Columbia. These jurisdictions were chosen because they are developed economies, have been disrupted by the COVID-19 epidemic, and official documentation is available in English. They also have patterns of problem drug use similar to Ireland and provide a comparable range of treatment and harm reduction responses. The evidence brief also presents a summary of information available in Ireland and in other countries in the European Union to provide a context beside which findings from the four research countries can be read.

[https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/32296/1/HRB\\_evidence%20brief%20for%20DPU%20Covid-19%20rapid%20assessment\\_June\\_2020.pdf](https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/32296/1/HRB_evidence%20brief%20for%20DPU%20Covid-19%20rapid%20assessment_June_2020.pdf)

### **How has COVID-19 affected some of the most vulnerable people in society?**

LSE Research - video

We've been working with our global partners to consider how drug users and homeless people have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeEemWw2BXQ&feature=youtu.be>

## **JOURNAL ARTICLES**

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### **Risk, resilience, psychological distress, and anxiety at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany**

Petzold, M B, Bendau, A, Plag, J, et al.  
Brain and Behavior, 2020, e01745

#### **Background:**

The current COVID-19 pandemic comes with multiple psychological stressors due to health-related, social, economic, and individual consequences and may cause psychological distress. The aim of this study was to screen the population in Germany for negative impact on mental health in the current COVID-19 pandemic and to analyze possible risk and protective factors.

#### **Methods:**

A total of 6,509 people took part in an online survey in Germany from 27 March to 6 April. The questionnaire included demographic information and ascertained psychological distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms, and risk and protective factors.

#### **Results:**

In our sample, over 50% expressed suffering from anxiety and psychological distress regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants spent several hours per day thinking about COVID-19 ( $M = 4.45$ ). Psychological and social determinants showed stronger associations with anxiety regarding COVID-19 than experiences with the disease.

#### **Conclusions:**

The current COVID-19 pandemic does cause psychological distress, anxiety, and depression for large proportions of the general population. Strategies such as maintaining a healthy lifestyle and social contacts, acceptance of anxiety and negative emotions, fostering self-efficacy, and information on where to get medical treatment if needed, seem of help, while substance abuse and suppression of anxiety and negative emotions seem to be associated with more psychological burden.

#### **COVID-19 - Enacting a 'new normal' for people who use drugs**

Chang, J; Agliata, J; Guarinieri, M

International Journal of Drug Policy, 2020, 102832

The COVID-19 crisis has magnified existing social, economic and political inequities. People who use drugs are particularly vulnerable due to criminalisation and stigma and often experience underlying health conditions, higher rates of poverty, unemployment and homelessness, as well as a lack of access to vital resources – putting them at greater risk of infection. On the other hand, COVID-19 presents an opportunity to confront the mistakes of the past and re-negotiate a new social contract. The International Network of People who use Drugs (INPUD) believe that this crisis must be an occasion to rethink the function of punishment, to reform the system and to work towards ending the war on drugs. This commentary presents a set of recommendations to UN agencies, governments, donor agencies, academics and researchers and civil society, challenging these actors to work alongside people who use drugs to enact a new reality based on solidarity and cooperation, protection of health and restoration of rights and dignity and most importantly to mobilise to win the peace.

#### **Opioid use disorder treatment and potential interactions with novel COVID-19 medications: a clinical perspective**

Mansuri, Z; Shah, B; Trivedi, C; et al

Primary Care Companion for CNS Disorders

22, 4, 20com02703, 2020

#### **Transmission and prevention of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in prisons**

Iglesias-Osores, S

Revista Española de Sanidad Penitenciaria

22, 2, p.87-90, 2020

#### **Participation of the nursing workforce to address COVID-19 among people who use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs**

Guilamo-Ramos, V, Benzekri, A, Thimm-Kaiser, M, Abram, M, Hagan, H

International Journal of Drug Policy, 2020, 102831

#### **Is compulsive social media use amid COVID-19 pandemic addictive behavior or coping mechanism?**

Singh S, Dixit A, Joshi G

Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 2020, 54, 10229

#### **Adolescent psychiatric disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown**

Guessoum, S B; Lachal, J; Radjack, R; et al

Psychiatry Research, 2020, 291, 113264

The aim of this paper was to review the literature on adolescent psychiatric disorders related to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Stressful life events, extended home confinement, brutal grief, intrafamilial violence, overuse of the Internet and social media are factors that could influence the mental health of adolescents during this period. The COVID-19 pandemic could result in increased psychiatric disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress, Depressive, and Anxiety Disorders, as well as grief-related symptoms. Adolescents with psychiatric disorders are at risk of a break or change in their care and management; they may experience increased symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown may have a negative impact on the mental health of adolescents, although there is still no data on the long term impact of this crisis. Adolescents' individual, familial, and social vulnerability, as well as individual and familial coping abilities, are factors related to adolescent mental health in times of crisis. Adolescents are often vulnerable and require careful consideration by caregivers and healthcare system adaptations to allow for mental health support despite the lockdown. Research on

adolescent psychiatric disorders in times of pandemics is necessary, as such a global situation could be prolonged or repeated.

**Telehealth for substance-using populations in the age of coronavirus disease 2019: recommendations to enhance adoption**

Lin L.A., Fernandez A.C., Bonar E.E.

JAMA Psychiatry

15 July 2020

DOI: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.1698

**Social support is key to retention in care during Covid-19 pandemic among older people with HIV and substance use disorders in Ukraine**

Roanova J, Shenoi S, Zaviryukha I, et al.

Substance Use and Misuse

15 July 2020

DOI:10.1080/10826084.2020.1791183

**Background:**

Older people with human immunodeficiency virus - HIV (OPWH) defined as  $\geq 50$  years old account for a growing proportion of newly diagnosed infections in Ukraine (16% in 2018), but the prevalence of substance use disorder among OPWH in Ukraine remains unknown. Ukraine responded to the Covid-19 pandemic with a comprehensive lockdown in late March 2020.

**Objectives:**

We conducted a phone survey among 123 OPWH with substance use disorders (SUD) in Kyiv in May 2020 to learn if these older adults may continue HIV and SUD therapy while coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Results:**

Data from the survey demonstrated that while OPWH with SUD maintained HIV and SUD therapy throughout Covid-19 lockdown, social support is critical to avoiding treatment interruption for OPWH with SUD.

**Conclusions/Importance:**

During reopening, reduction of support may lead to OPWH feeling even more isolated. Post-Covid-19 pharmacological approaches to SUD treatment without social support are like vehicles without gas. The research agenda for OPWH patients with SUD going forward must include determining the type of telehealth support that will be optimally effective to retain OPWH including people who inject drugs (PWID), provision of support by lay health workers, and cost-effectiveness of such interventions. The lessons learned may be relevant to other countries as well.

**Impacts of COVID-19 on youth mental health, substance use, and well-being: a rapid survey of clinical and community samples**

Répercussions de la COVID-19 sur la santé mentale, l'utilisation de substances et le bien-être des adolescents : un sondage rapide d'échantillons cliniques et communautaires

Hawke LD, Barbic SP, Voineskos A, et al.

Canadian Journal of Psychiatry

14 July 2020

doi:10.1177/0706743720940562

**Objectives:**

The current novel coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic presents a time-sensitive opportunity to rapidly enhance our knowledge about the impacts of public health crises on youth mental health, substance use, and well-being. This study examines youth mental health and substance use during the pandemic period.

**Methods:**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 622 youth participants across existing clinical and community cohorts. Using the National Institute of Mental Health-developed CRISIS tool and other measures, participants reported on the impacts of COVID-19 on their mental health, substance use, and other constructs.

**Results:**

Reports of prepandemic mental health compared to intrapandemic mental health show a statistically significant deterioration of mental health across clinical and community samples ( $P < 0.001$ ), with greater deterioration in the community sample. A total of 68.4% of youth in the clinical sample and 39.9% in the community sample met screening criteria for an internalizing disorder. Substance use declined in both clinical and community samples ( $P < 0.001$ ), although 23.2% of youth in the clinical sample and 3.0% in the community sample met screening criteria for a substance use disorder.

Participants across samples report substantial mental health service disruptions (48.7% and 10.8%) and unmet support needs (44.1% and 16.2%). Participants report some positive impacts, are using a variety of coping strategies to manage their wellness, and shared a variety of ideas of strategies to support youth during the pandemic.

#### **Conclusions:**

Among youth with histories of mental health concerns, the pandemic context poses a significant risk for exacerbation of need. In addition, youth may experience the onset of new difficulties. We call on service planners to attend to youth mental health during COVID-19 by bolstering the accessibility of services. Moreover, there is an urgent need to engage young people as coresearchers to understand and address the impacts of the pandemic and the short, medium, and long terms.

#### **Addictovigilance contribution during COVID-19 epidemic and lockdown in France** Lapeyre-

Mestre M, Boucher A, Daveluy A, et al.

Therapie.

23 June 2020

doi:10.1016/j.therap.2020.06.006

Addictovigilance is a safety monitoring targeted at substances with potential for abuse and dependence. This vigilance was involved during the period of COVID-19 epidemic due to the significant changes in access to drugs and psychological disruption caused by the pandemic and lockdown. This article aims to present the different steps implemented by the French Addictovigilance network in collaboration with the French Health authorities from March to May 2020, including monitoring of potential harmful events, and scientific communication. The first events were identified through the continuity of the networking between the French addictovigilance centres and their partners: community pharmacies, general practitioners, specialized structures and emergency wards. As soon as the lockdown began, first cases of overdoses (lethal or not) were reported with opioids, mainly with methadone, and other opioids (heroin, oxycodone, tramadol or antitussive codeine). Lockdown-related noteworthy events consisted in clinical cases or other relevant information for which lockdown clearly played an important role: among the many substances identified at least once, pregabalin, benzodiazepines, cannabis, cocaine and nitrous oxide were the most significant in terms of prevalence, seriousness or particularly specific to the lockdown context. Despite significant decrease in the activity and travel limited to vital needs, community pharmacies continued to identify falsified prescriptions in this period, highlighting an increase in suspicious requests for pregabalin, codeine and tramadol. In parallel, the French addictovigilance network continued its communications efforts in the period, issuing a newsletter on tramadol, a press release on methadone and naloxone, and participating in the COVID-19 frequently asked questions (FAQs) of the French Society of Pharmacology and Therapeutic website (<https://sfpt-fr.org/covid19>). COVID-19 epidemic has been an important challenge for addictovigilance, and has proved that this monitoring is highly essential for alerting health professionals and health authorities to points of vigilance in the field of psychoactive substances.

#### **New challenges in addiction medicine: COVID-19 infection in patients with alcohol and substance use disorders-the perfect storm**

Spagnolo PA, Montemitro C, Leggio L.

American Journal of Psychiatry

14 July 2020

doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2020.20040417

**Impact of the COVID-19-related lockdown on drug users and drug services providers in Luxembourg: preliminary observations**

Berndt, N C; Seixas, R

Point Focal Luxembourgeois de l'Observatoire Européen des Drogues et des Toxicomanies  
Luxembourg : 2020

As a result of the national measures that have been implemented to contain and mitigate the pandemic of the COVID-19 across Luxembourg, drug services are facing unprecedented challenges to continue providing adequate care to people who use drugs in the community and in prisons. The Luxembourg Focal Point of the EMCDDA (PFLDT) invited the national treatment and harm reduction service providers to participate in a study to rapidly map the impact of COVID-19 lockdown measures on people who use drugs, their drug use patterns and behaviours, and drug services to get better insight in the challenges they face and the responses they introduced accordingly. The PFLDT compiled the responses of each service as part of a larger EMCDDA Trendspotter study assessing the impact in each EU member state. The present report is based on information provided by service providers in the context of the study conducted in Luxembourg between April 7-20 2020. The information is based on individual views and perceptions and do not necessarily represent the views of the entire institutions.

<https://bit.ly/3ewYj7j>

**COVID-19, consumo de sustancias psicoactivas y adicciones en España**

Delegación del Gobierno para el Plan Nacional sobre Drogas

Observatorio Español de las Drogas y las Adicciones (OEDA)

Madrid: 2020

La epidemia de COVID 19 ha supuesto un importante impacto en la vida diaria de las personas y un reto sin precedentes para los servicios de salud que prestan atención a las personas con adicción. Esta situación ha podido condicionar cambios en las pautas de consumo de sustancias psicoactivas y otras adicciones. Con el objetivo de conocer este potencial impacto de la pandemia y las medidas implantadas para su control sobre el consumo de sustancias psicoactivas y sus problemas asociados, el Observatorio Español de las Drogas y las Adicciones ha realizado un seguimiento de esta situación a partir de diferentes fuentes de información.

Se presenta aquí el primer análisis realizado a partir de estas fuentes que se han desarrollado durante los meses de marzo a junio 2020.

[https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/noticiasEventos/actualidad/2020\\_Coronavirus/pdf/20200715\\_Informe\\_IM\\_PACTO\\_COVID-19\\_OEDA\\_final.pdf](https://pnsd.sanidad.gob.es/noticiasEventos/actualidad/2020_Coronavirus/pdf/20200715_Informe_IM_PACTO_COVID-19_OEDA_final.pdf)

**Transtorno por uso de substâncias deve aumentar em função da pandemia**

[https://portugues.medscape.com/verartigo/6505031?src=mkm\\_ptmkt\\_200715\\_mscmrk\\_ptcoronavirus\\_nl&uac=154076EN&implID=2459995&faf=1](https://portugues.medscape.com/verartigo/6505031?src=mkm_ptmkt_200715_mscmrk_ptcoronavirus_nl&uac=154076EN&implID=2459995&faf=1)

**Did drug busts and COVID just win the drug war?**

Recent events may look like good news for those who think prohibition can deliver a 'drug free world' | Transform blog, UK

<https://transformdrugs.org/did-drug-busts-and-covid-just-win-the-drug-war/>

**The coronavirus has gutted the price of coca: It could reshape the cocaine trade**

<https://bit.ly/2Oj956F>

**Profits 'through the roof' as drug dealers hike prices amid pandemic**

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/profits-through-the-roof-as-drug-dealers-hike-prices-amid-pandemic-20200710-p55atw.html>

**Coronavirus and drug addiction are both a public health crisis – but only one is being taken seriously**

Our politicians don't miss a chance to remind us that they are guided by the science on Covid-19 yet the government has ignored its own scientific advisors on how to reduce drug-related deaths | Independent voices, UK

[https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronavirus-drug-addiction-deaths-funding-public-health-science-a9612886.html?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Twitter#Echobox=1594622189](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronavirus-drug-addiction-deaths-funding-public-health-science-a9612886.html?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1594622189)

**Fatal drug overdoses are likely increasing again because of the coronavirus pandemic**

"Everything we have to do to fight the coronavirus pandemic — social distancing, closing businesses, limiting gatherings — makes the overdose crisis worse," said one | BuzzFeed, USA

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/danvergano/coronavirus-overdose-fentanyl?ref=bfnsplash>

**COVID-19 is killing with more than just a virus**

For those who are struggling with addiction, surviving this pandemic requires constant restraint. And for some, it's already proven too much to bear.

<https://www.prevention.com/health/a33297962/coronavirus-and-alcohol-drug-addiction/>

**In shadow of pandemic, U.S. drug overdose deaths resurge to record**

After the first decrease in a quarter-century, in 2018, the number of deaths is again on the rise | NYTimes, USA

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/15/upshot/drug-overdose-deaths.html?smid=tw-share>