



EMCDDA DOCUMENTATION CENTRE INFORMATION BULLETIN

**CORONAVIRUS, 30 October 2020**

#### EVENT

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#### **¿Es posible la prevención en escolares en tiempos de la pandemia de COVID-19?**

Le informamos del próximo Webinar internacional organizado por la CICAD, la OPS, y el Ajuntament de València que se celebrará el próximo día 3 de noviembre a las 15:00 horas en España, 9:00 horas en Washington.

<https://uisys.us15.list->

[manage.com/track/click?u=3112368cf49c1b458ed572f4c&id=eb4d9af491&e=8f5ab94646](https://uisys.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3112368cf49c1b458ed572f4c&id=eb4d9af491&e=8f5ab94646)

**Addictions en temps de confinement**

OFDT

Paris: 2020

Quelles ont été les conséquences, en France, de la période de confinement (entre le 17 mars et le 11 mai 2020) sur les conduites addictives, les circuits de distribution ou les pratiques professionnelles ? Un nouveau numéro de la publication Tendances de l'OFDT propose un état des lieux des addictions en France, en temps de confinement. Concernant le tabac et l'alcool, le document rédigé collectivement par l'équipe de l'OFDT confronte les données produites par des systèmes d'information et des institutions partenaires, notamment Santé publique France (enquête CoviPrev). Pour le cannabis, le numéro de Tendances délivre les premiers résultats de l'enquête Cannabis online menée durant l'été 2020 et à laquelle 2 778 personnes majeures ont répondu. Dans un contexte de stabilité globale des consommations, on constate que les usagers les plus réguliers de tabac, d'alcool et de cannabis semblent avoir maintenu ou intensifié leurs consommations. Ce numéro de Tendances se penche également sur les jeux d'argent et de hasard (JAH) et l'essor des pratiques de poker en ligne. Enfin, la publication rappelle les initiatives déployées par les professionnels de l'addictologie et de la réduction des risques et des dommages (RdRD) pour adapter leurs pratiques et les protocoles de prises en charge.

Les résultats contenus dans ce numéro ont été présentés par Ivana Obradovic, directrice adjointe de l'OFDT, lors du webinaire organisé par la Fédération Addiction le 19 octobre autour de la thématique « Addictions : Quelles leçons tirer de la crise sanitaire ? ».

<https://www.ofdt.fr/BDD/publications/docs/eftxof2a9.pdf>

### **Understanding challenges for recovery homes during COVID-19**

Polcin, D L; Mahoney, E; Wittman, F; et al

International Journal of Drug Policy

16 October 2020

DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102986

Understanding the effects of COVID-19 mitigation for persons in group living environments is of critical importance to limiting the spread of the virus. In the U.S., residential recovery homes for persons with alcohol and drug disorders are good examples of high-risk environments where virus mitigation procedures are essential. The National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) has taken recommendations developed by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and applied them to recovery home settings. This paper describes how COVID-19 mitigation efforts in recovery homes may be influenced by two factors. First, while some houses are licensed by states with rigorous health and safety standards, others are not licensed and are subject to less oversight. These homes may be more inconsistent in adhering to mitigation standards. Second, to varying degrees, recovery homes use a social model approach to recovery that contrasts with mitigation procedures such as social distancing and stay-at-home orders. This paper provides examples of ways recovery homes have been forced to adjust to the competing demands of mitigation efforts and social model recovery. The paper also identifies multiple questions that could be addressed by provider-researcher coalitions to inform how social model recovery can navigate forward during the era of COVID-19. As we move forward during the era of COVID-19, providers are encouraged to remember that recovery homes have a history of resilience facing adversity and in fact have their origins in grassroots responses to the challenges of their times.

### **Commentary on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on opioid use disorder treatment among Indigenous communities in the United States and Canada**

Wendt DC, Marsan S, Parker D, et al

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment

8 October 2020

DOI: 10.1016/j.jsat.2020.108165

This commentary focuses on how some Indigenous communities in the United States (U.S.) and Canada are addressing the opioid epidemic within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the perspective of the co-authors as researchers, clinicians, and pharmacists working within or among Indigenous communities in three eastern Canadian provinces and two western U.S. states. The pandemic has likely exacerbated opioid use problems among Indigenous communities, especially for individuals with acute distress or comorbid mental illness, or who are in need of withdrawal management or residential services. In response to the pandemic, we discuss first how greater prescription flexibility has facilitated and even increased access to medications for opioid use disorder. Second, we describe how Indigenous-serving clinics have expanded telemedicine services, albeit not without some challenges. Third, we note challenges with restricted participation in traditional Indigenous healing practices that can be helpful for addiction recovery. Fourth, we mention providers' worries about the pandemic's impact on their patients' mental health and safety. We argue that certain treatment transformations may be helpful even after the pandemic is over, through enhancing access to community-grounded treatment, decreasing stigma, and promoting patient self-efficacy.

### **Acceptance of e-consult for Substance Use Disorders during the COVID 19 pandemic: A study from India**

Sahu P., Mathur A., Ganesh A., et al

Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 2020, 54, 102451

#### **Objectives:**

The COVID 19 pandemic has created challenges in providing timely care for patients and families with Substance Use disorders (SUDs). With the difficulties in face-to-face consultations because of social distancing measures, telepsychiatry services can be beneficial. The study proposes implementing an e-consult for SUD management and measuring its acceptability among the health care providers (HCPs) in India.

#### **Methods:**

The mobile-based e-consult for SUD, connecting HCPs with addiction specialists, was implemented during the COVID lockdown period in India from 25 March to 31 May (71 days). A total of 153 HCPs, i.e., doctors, nurses, counselors, consulted for 110 cases of SUD. Sixty-eight provided feedback by

filling the survey form derived from the Service User Technology Acceptability Questionnaire (SUTAQ).

**Result:**

More than 60% of HCPs reported overall high satisfaction. More than 98% providers reported high acceptability concerning "access to specialist care," "trusted to work appropriately," "saving time," "would like to recommend to others," "easier to get touch with a specialist." The doctors reported significantly high acceptability about "access to specialist care," "satisfied with recommendations," "recommend to others" compared to other HCPs.

**Conclusion:**

During COVID 19 pandemic lockdown in India, e-consult was an acceptable tool in managing SUDs. The majority of HCPs could discuss their cases with addiction experts. There is a need to expand this further in other mental health conditions.

**Impacts of COVID-19 and associated restrictions on people who use illicit stimulants in Western Australia: findings from the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System 2020**

Grugg, J; Lenton, S

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)

Sydney: 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on travel and gathering have likely had major impacts on drug supply, use and harms and there have been significant challenges with delivery of drug treatment and harm reduction services. People who use drugs may also be at increased risk of COVID-19 transmission because of the social nature of drug procurement and use. There have been urgent calls for evidence regarding the experiences of people who use drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic to inform public health efforts. Recognising the critical need for information, the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) project has been adapted to collect important data on people's experiences during COVID-19. As such, this bulletin represents findings from 100 interviews undertaken in Perth, Western Australia between 3 May and 29 June 2020, as part of the EDRS.

**Clinical impact of COVID-19 on people with substance use disorders**

Vallecillo, G, Perelló, R, Güerri, R, Fonseca, F, Torrens, M

Journal of Public Health

26 October 2020

DOI: 10.1093/pubmed/fdaa181

**Background:**

People with substance use disorders are considered at increased risk of COVID-19 and its more serious complications, however data on the impact of COVID-19 are lacking. The study aimed to describe the clinical characteristics and outcomes of COVID-19 on people with substance use disorders.

**Methods:**

An observational study was carried out including patients aged  $\geq$  years with COVID-19 pneumonia admitted to an urban hospital during March 12 to June 21, 2020.

**Results:**

Among 2078 patients admitted, 27 (1.3%) were people with substance use disorders: 23(85.2%) were men with a median age of 56.1 + 10.3 years and. The main SUD were alcohol in 18(66.7%) patients, heroine in 6(22.2%) and cocaine in 3(11.1%) and 24(88.8%) patients were on ongoing substance use disorder treatment. One or more comorbidities associated to COVID-19 risk were observed in 18(66.6%) of patients. During a median length of stay of 10 days (IQR:7-19), severe pneumonia developed in 7(25.9%) patients, acute respiratory distress syndrome in 5 (18.5%) and none died.

**Conclusion:**

Larger sample sizes and sero-epidemiological studies are needed to confirm the low incidence of severe COVID-19 on patients with SUD.

**Changes in substance use among young adults during a respiratory disease pandemic**

Sharma, P, Ebbert, J O, Rosedahl, JK, Philpot, L M

SAGE Open Medicine, 2020, 8

**Background:**

News articles, commentaries, and opinion articles have suggested that ongoing social distancing measures coupled with economic challenges during COVID-19 may worsen stress, affective state, and substance use across the globe. We sought to advance our understanding of the differences between individuals who change their substance use patterns during a public health crisis and those who do not.

**Methods:**

Cross-sectional survey of young adults (18–25 years of age) assessing respondent characteristics and vaping, tobacco, alcohol, and/or marijuana use. We calculated prevalence estimates, prevalence changes, and prevalence ratios with associated 95% confidence intervals and looked for differences with the chi-square test.

**Results:**

Of the total sample, 53.2% (n = 542/1018) young adults reported vaping or using tobacco, alcohol, and/or marijuana. Among the 542 respondents reporting use, 34.3% reported a change in their use patterns. Among respondents reporting changes in substance use patterns during the pandemic (n = 186), 68.8% reported an increase in alcohol use, 44.0% reported a decrease in vaping product use, and 47.3% reported a decrease in tobacco product use due to COVID-19. Substance use changed significantly for respondents with increasing degree of loneliness (continuous loneliness score: prevalence ratio = 1.12, 95% confidence interval = 1.01–1.25), anxiety (prevalence ratio = 1.45, 95% confidence interval = 1.14–1.85), and depression (prevalence ratio = 1.44, 95% confidence interval = 1.13–1.82).

**Conclusion:**

Self-reported substance use among young adults was observed to change during a pandemic, and the degree of loneliness appears to impact these changes. Innovative strategies are needed to address loneliness, anxiety, depression, and substance use during global health crises that impact social contact.

**How will Covid-19 influence addictive behaviours and their management?**

Murthy, P

Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Mental Health

22 October 2020

DOI: 10.1007/s40737-020-00207-3

**Erwartete Auswirkungen der Covid-19-Pandemie auf Angehörige Suchtkranker**

Anticipated effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on family members affected by addiction

Bischof G., Velleman R., Bischof A., Orford J.J.

Sucht 2020 66 :4 (201 - 206)

**Fragestellung:**

Angehörige von Suchtkranken stellen eine belastete substantielle Gruppe dar, die in Forschung und Versorgung unzureichend repräsentiert ist. Es liegen bislang keine wissenschaftlichen Zahlen zu den Auswirkungen der durch die Covid-19 Pandemie verursachten sozialen Einschränkungen auf Belastungen und Versorgungsangebote für Angehörige vor.

**Methode:**

Internationale Expertenbefragung und Befragung von Mitarbeitenden des deutschen Suchthilfesystems.

**Ergebnisse:**

Während primär eine Zunahme von Belastungen durch Auswirkungen der Pandemie in Form von erhöhtem Risikoverhalten des suchtkranken Angehörigen und einer Zunahme interpersoneller Konflikte vermutet wird, ergaben sich auch Hinweise auf mögliche entlastende Auswirkungen bei Subgruppen von Angehörigen. Aus der Versorgung wurde ein Rückgang an Angeboten für Angehörige sowie ein tendenzieller Rückgang der Nachfrage berichtet.

**Schlussfolgerungen:**

Auswirkungen von Suchterkrankungen auf das soziale Umfeld sollten in Studien zu substanzbezogenen und affektiven Störungen sowie zu häuslicher Gewalt miteinbezogen werden. Evidenzbasierte Angebote für Angehörige Suchtkranker sollten flächendeckend und digital angeboten werden. Die Vernetzung mit weiteren psychosozialen Angeboten sollte optimiert werden.

**Aim:**

Although affected family members of individuals suffering from addiction (AFMs) show elevated levels of stress and strain they have been not adequately addressed by research and care. To date, there are no reliable data on the effects of the social restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on burden and care offers for AFMs.

**Method:**

International survey of experts and a survey of treatment providers from Germany.

**Results:**

While mainly an increase in strain due to the effects of the pandemic regarding increased risk behavior by the addicted family member and an increase of interpersonal conflicts is expected, also some possible positive effects on subgroups of AFMs were reported. Overall, a decline in supply for relatives and a trend for reduced demand for help by AFMs were reported from treatment providers.

**Conclusions:**

Effects of Addiction on the families should routinely be assessed in studies on addictive and affective disorders as well as in studies on domestic violence. Evidence-based support for AFMs should be offered nationwide and digital as well. Networking with other psychosocial offers should be optimized.

**Loneliness, mental health, and substance use among US young adults during COVID-19**

Horigian, V E, Schmidt, R D, Feaster, D J

Journal of Psychoactive Drugs

28 October 2020

doi: 10.1080/02791072.2020.1836435

As COVID-19 converges with loneliness and addiction epidemics in the US, both public health and mental health experts forecast dramatic increases in substance use and mental health conditions. This cross-sectional study evaluated relationships of loneliness with depression, anxiety, alcohol use, and drug use during COVID-19, and assessed perceived increases in these symptoms in young adults. Between April 22 and May 11, 2020, 1,008 participants ages 18-35 were recruited through social media to a one-time, online anonymous survey. Symptomatology was assessed using six scales. Perceived changes since COVID-19 were evaluated using 5-point Likert scales. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported loneliness scores above 50; 80% reported significant depressive symptoms; 61% reported moderate to severe anxiety; 30% disclosed harmful levels of drinking. While only 22% of the population reported using drugs, 38% reported severe drug use. Loneliness was associated with higher levels of mental health symptomatology. Participants reported significant increases across mental health and substance use symptoms since COVID-19. While direct impacts of COVID-19 could only be calculated with pre-pandemic assessments of these symptoms, estimates indicate elevated psychosocial symptomatology and suggest that symptoms could have worsened since the pandemic. Findings underscore the importance of prevention and intervention to address these public health problems.

**Healthcare utilization patterns among persons who use drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Murphy, S M, Yoder, J, Pathak, J, Avery, J

Journal of Subst Abuse Treatment

21 October 2020

doi: 10.1016/j.jsat.2020.108177

Persons with drug use disorders are an underserved and stigmatized population, and the COVID-19 pandemic could exacerbate these issues. The discussion around those with drug use disorders in the midst of the pandemic has focused on the need to ensure uninterrupted treatment access; however, very few in this population actually receive treatment, and retention is a substantial issue among those who do. Evidence from other chronic conditions suggests persons at high risk for severe COVID-19 complications are foregoing care due to fear of contracting the virus. Persons with drug use disorders tend to fall into this high-risk category, and thus may be avoiding healthcare facilities. Our data suggest this is true. If so, adverse outcomes, and increased severity of use disorders and associated health complications, could become prevalent. Clinicians should identify persons with drug use disorders who may be foregoing treatment, and engage them using methods that minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

**The provision of counseling to patients receiving medications for opioid use disorder: Telehealth innovations and challenges in the age of COVID-19**

Hughto J.M.W., Peterson L., Perry N.S., et al

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 2021, 120, 108163

Historically, federal and state policies have narrowly defined treatment models that have resulted in limited access to and engagement in counseling for individuals receiving medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD; e.g., methadone and buprenorphine). In response to the coronavirus pandemic, outpatient MOUD treatment providers rapidly transitioned from traditional, in-person care delivery models to revised COVID-19 protocols that prioritized telehealth counseling to protect the health of patients and staff and ensure continuity in MOUD care. These telehealth innovations appear to mitigate many of the longstanding barriers to counseling in the traditional system and have the potential to forever alter MOUD care delivery. Drawing on data from a Rhode Island-based clinic, we argue that MOUD counseling is achievable via telehealth and outline the need for, and anticipated benefits of, hybrid telehealth/in-person MOUD treatment models moving forward.

**COVID-19, HIV and key populations: cross-cutting issues and the need for population-specific responses**

**Introduction:**

Key populations at elevated risk to contract or transmit HIV may also be at higher risk of COVID-19 complications and adverse outcomes associated with public health prevention measures. However, the conditions faced by specific populations vary according to social, structural and environmental factors, including stigma and discrimination, criminalization, social and economic safety nets and the local epidemiology of HIV and COVID-19, which determine risk of exposure and vulnerability to adverse health outcomes, as well as the ability to comply with measures such as physical distancing. This commentary identifies common vulnerabilities and cross-cutting themes in terms of the impacts of COVID-19 on key populations before addressing issues and concerns specific to particular populations.

**Discussion:**

Cross-cutting themes include direct impacts such as disrupted access to essential medicines, commodities and services such as anti-retroviral treatment, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, opioid agonist treatment, viral load monitoring, HIV and sexually transmitted infections testing, condoms and syringes. Indirect impacts include significant collateral damage arising from prevention measures which restrict human rights, increase or impose criminal penalties, and expand police powers to target vulnerable and criminalized populations. Significant heterogeneity in the COVID-19 pandemic, the underlying HIV epidemic and the ability of key populations to protect themselves means that people who inject drugs and sex workers face particular challenges, including indirect impacts as a result of police targeting, loss of income and sometimes both. Geographical variations mean that transgender people and men who have sex with men in regions like Africa and the middle east remain criminalized, as well as stigmatized and discriminated against, increasing their vulnerability to adverse outcomes in relation to COVID-19.

**Conclusions:**

Disruptions to both licit and illicit supply chains, loss of income and livelihoods and changes in behaviour as a result of lockdowns and physical distancing have the potential to exacerbate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on key populations. While these impacts will vary significantly, human-rights approaches to COVID-19 emergency laws and public health prevention measures that are population-specific and sensitive, will be key to reducing adverse health outcomes and ensuring that no one is left behind.

**Addiction treatment becomes casualty of war on COVID-19**

<https://eu.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/10/24/coronavirus-pandemic-opioid-epidemic-regression/5927451002/>

**Inside the CDC data that confirm the pandemic is driving up overdose deaths**

For months, media outlets including Filter ( <https://filtermag.org/spike-coronavirus-overdose/> ) have reported on a collage of anecdotal and local alerts from around the country that drug overdose deaths have been spiking since the COVID-19 pandemic began. On October 14, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) finally confirmed this development on a national scale with the release of preliminary data | Filter Magazine, USA

<https://filtermag.org/cdc-pandemic-overdose-deaths/>

**Real-time opioid overdose tracking system helps show rise after COVID-19's arrival**

COVID-19 may dominate the headlines. But another epidemic that was already raging before it arrived has flared up in recent months, too, according to new University of Michigan data | Medical Xpress, USA

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-real-time-opioid-overdose-tracking-covid-.html>

**Mental illness is on the rise due to COVID-19. Could psychedelic drugs be the 'game changer'?**

Thomas Hartle is a 52-year-old IT technician from Saskatoon who doesn't smoke, rarely drinks and never dabbled in drugs before trying medicinal cannabis. As part of his profession, the soft-spoken, detail-oriented father of two typically spends much of his time planning and researching | Toronto Star, Canada

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/10/25/mental-illness-is-on-the-rise-due-to-covid-19-could-psychedelic-drugs-be-the-game-changer.html>

**Has drug problem worsened under COVID-19?**

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/oct/28/joe-manchin/has-drug-dependence-increased-under-covid-19/>

**Predictions of more suicides, overdoses and domestic abuse during COVID are coming true**

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/predictions-suicides-overdoses-domestic-abuse-covid-coming-true/story?id=73836752>

**Drug markets during COVID-19 (PART 2 - Autumn 2020)**

In March 2020 we launched our first COVID-19 and Drugs Markets Survey. A massive thank you to over 400 people who responded. To follow on from that, and to see what has changed, we have relaunched our survey in October 2020 - for 2 weeks only! | Crew, UK

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SGSMG63>

**Our need for a safe supply of drugs includes stimulants**

COVID-19 has made a severe overdose crisis much worse. Border closures have caused major disruptions to drug supplies, increasing the need to "cut" the existing supply with substances such as fentanyl or benzodiazepines | Filter magazine, USA

<https://filtermag.org/safe-supply-stimulants/>

**COVID may be making opioid treatment less accessible for pregnant women: expert**

[https://drugfree.org/drug-and-alcohol-news/covid-may-be-making-opioid-treatment-less-accessible-for-pregnant-women-expert/?utm\\_source=pns&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=covid-may-be-making-opioid-treatment-less-accessible-for-pregnant-women-expert](https://drugfree.org/drug-and-alcohol-news/covid-may-be-making-opioid-treatment-less-accessible-for-pregnant-women-expert/?utm_source=pns&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=covid-may-be-making-opioid-treatment-less-accessible-for-pregnant-women-expert)