Harm reduction in Austria – selected topics

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Policy frame; „philosophy of interventions“

• Disease concept: problematic drug use pattern and drug dependency are defined as complex diseases
• „Treatment before punishment“
• Adapted to the complex nature of the drug disease drug care is a multidisciplinary task for highly educated and skilled professionals
• Open/low treshold access to facilities of care; integrating harm reduction with healthcare services; immunization against Hepatitis A and B.
• Reach-out social work
• Regular quality control of treatment facilities as well as of harm reduction providers
• Overall: Destigmatisation/Normalisation
Harm reduction and risk minimalization in Austria

**Target group 1:** users of party drugs: since 1997 Checkit! (Vienna); Z6 (Tyrol, since 2014). Model: Selective and indicated prevention

**Target group 2:** actual drug users; esp. opioid dependent individuals. Model: basic support, easy access to treatment and counseling, harm reduction offers, survival support, satisfaction of basic needs.

**Target group 3:** clients suffering drug-use related diseases. Model: indicated medical intervention

**Target group 4:** incarcerated individuals (substance dependent drug offenders and dependent prison inmates who were sentenced for other reasons).
Integrating harm reduction with healthcare services: interventions, models and methods

Target group 1: drug quality testing (on site and in the institution)
client empowerment: information and counseling is offered on location or via internet.

Target group 2: **OST (opioid substitution treatment)**. Since 1987 this type of treatment is offered by specially educated and trained generalists and psychiatrists as regular treatment approach within the medical system. In line with an integrated model it is also offered in drug treatment services and in prison. In 2017 18 222 patients (60 % of the injecting opioid addict population) were reached,
**Empowerment**: information, counseling, group work, information concerning safer use; needle and syringe exchange together with distribution of other injecting equipment (since early 90ties, high acceptance (6, 2 million equipments delivered in 2017), high return (88%) of used equipment)

Target group 3: **Indicated medical intervention**. Harm reduction providers facilitate clients’ access to treatment for chronic hepatitis C infection (HVC) through hepatitis outpatient clinics in close collaboration with hospitals in Graz, Innsbruck and Vienna. In Vienna observed treatment with new directly acting antivirals (DAA) is also available for clients in opioid treatment in the main low-threshold facility in Vienna (to increase compliance).

Target group 4: when indicated OST; counseling; new HVC treatment project for prison inmates (cooperation between the Clinic of Hepatology, Med Univ Vienna and the Justizanstalt Josefstadt)
One encouraging result: HIV diagnoses attributed to injecting drug use. *Source: EMCDDA country report Austria 2018*
Mode of transmission. Source, Breitenecker, 2017
Another one (also from the EMCDDA`s country report 2018)

• All HVC patients who participated in the first treatment trial in the Suchthilfe Wien showed good compliance and could be cured.
Many thanks for your attention

• References:
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