

3. WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE INITIATING METHADONE SUBSTITUTION?

Box 1: What needs to be done in methadone clinics prior to initiating opioid dependence treatment

- ◆ Establish policies and procedures for methadone maintenance treatment (outpatient delivery in supervised settings)
- ◆ Plans for staff education and training
- ◆ Backup coverage for the absence or leave of the medical doctor / core team
- ◆ Assurance of the privacy and confidentiality of addiction treatment information
- ◆ Linkages with other drug treatment services, who will accept referrals for other forms of treatment (e.g., abstinence-oriented approaches; psycho-social interventions)
- ◆ A referral network of medical specialists
- ◆ Timely physical examinations
- ◆ Linkages with medical treatment facilities including HIV treatment and care
- ◆ Linkages with addiction and psychiatric treatment programmes (e.g., detoxification centres, psychiatric clinics)
- ◆ Listing of community referral resources, including specific self-help groups who would welcome patients on methadone substitution

Regulatory rules

As methadone is a controlled narcotic drug, the central authority⁴ in each country will be responsible for procuring methadone for the substitution programme. Besides, it is necessary to follow other regulatory processes related to narcotic drugs in each country. So, it is recommended that the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Programme should be undertaken under the guidance of the central authority of any given country.

Assessment of the capacity of the agencies

The capacity of the agencies that will be establishing the methadone substitution clinics has to be assessed. Given the nature of the treatment and the regulatory procedures, it is important that the services are provided to begin with by clinics at the medical colleges, university hospitals, major government hospitals and recognised services offering drug treatment. Box 1 lists procedures that need to be established in methadone clinics at the outset.

⁴ Examples of central authority: In Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan - Narcotic Control Division / Department, Ministry of Home Affairs; in India, Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Finance; and in Sri Lanka, National Dangerous Drug Control Board