Abstract CND session 4th December 2023 – Ares do Pinhal

I’m speaking under the umbrella of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs”

Background

HIV is still a cause of concern in some vulnerable populations, such as people who use drugs and the homeless. Harm reduction or programmes that include this approach undertake a significant effort to screen, diagnose and treat this chronic condition. In the Mobile Outreach Program managed by Ares do Pinhal in Lisbon (Portugal), patient education and HIV management is a priority.

Methods

Screening for drug-related infectious diseases such as HIV is a priority in the intervention carried out among people who use drugs served by the Mobile Outreach Program in Lisbon. The approach also includes health education strategies and the promotion of health literacy as a way of combating the stigma associated with drug-related infectious and PWUD and promoting self-care. Case managers and monitors working in the Mobile Outreach Program are prioritising the linkage of clients to treatment services and offer the possibility of taking medication on Direct observed Therapy within the Mobile Outreach Program. The present data are based on the medical charts available in the program between 2001 and 2021.

Results

The Mobile Outreach Program managed around 8,323 individuals during the study period -around 85% males. For HIV, almost 27 thousands screenings were performed, with an average incidence of 2,2% and a prevalence of 21% during these 20 years. During these 20 years, we have observed an increase in prevalence between 2001 and 2006, which has been steadily decreasing over the last 15 years -from a prevalence of 26.9% in 2003 to 14.1% in 2021. In the last 5 years, the average number of needles/syringes provided is around 160 thousand per year, as well as 30 thousand condoms per year.

Conclusion

These results highlight the importance of the MOP managed by Ares do Pinhal in the screening and subsequent referral of patients with HIV since 2001. The needle exchange programme (NSP), but also investment in harm reduction education for people who use drugs and the effort to keep everyone screened, regardless of whether or not they are legal in the country, are essential to monitor and refer this specific group of people who use drugs and allow them access to specialised services in the drug-related infectious diseases.