

Gender-based Violence and Drug Overdose: Effective synergy between prevention models

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Background: Recent research has documented strong associations between experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) and drug overdose among women who use drugs (WWUD). Fear of discrimination and further violence often inhibits WWUD from calling police or emergency care during violent or overdose incidents that further increases their exposure to both violence and overdose. To tackle the issue, in Kyrgyzstan, India and Ukraine we integrated overdose (OD) prevention training into the WINGS (Women Initiating New Goals for Safety) GBV prevention intervention for WWUD.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: WINGS is an evidence-based Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) model consisting of 1-2 individual sessions focusing on raising awareness of and screening for different types of intimate partner violence and GBV, safety planning, enhancing motivation and social support to address violence, goal setting, linkage to GBV and narcological services, and OD prevention training. The OD prevention training includes overview of causes of overdose, recognizing the OD symptoms and ways to respond when Naloxone is and is not available.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: Ongoing assessments collected through WINGS tool demonstrate high prevalence of lifetime IPV, GBV and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in WINGS participants who also report exposure to and witnessing the OD incidence. Participation in WINGS sessions reduces victimization from GBV and increases OD prevention skills among WWUD.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Since exposure to violence increases likelihood of PTSD and triggers drug misuse and OD, WINGS SBIRT with integrated OD capacity building is efficient in managing OD episodes and GBV among WWUD. These integrated approaches have translational potential with scope of adoption, adaptation, and scaling-up.

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