

## **Understanding Gender Differences in Injecting Risk Behaviour Among an Australian Sample of People Who Inject Drugs**

DAISY GIBBS<sup>1</sup>, CALLUM WOODROW<sup>2</sup>, SAMANTHA COLLEDGE<sup>1,3</sup>, RACHEL SUTHERLAND<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, Australia,*

<sup>2</sup>*University of New South Wales, Sydney*

<sup>3</sup>*Behaviours and Health Risks Program, Burnet Institute*

Presenter's email: [daisy.gibbs@unsw.edu.au](mailto:daisy.gibbs@unsw.edu.au)

**Introduction and Aims:** Injecting risk behaviours, such as receptive sharing of injecting equipment or re-use of one's own equipment, is associated with bloodborne virus transmission and other injecting related injuries. Research suggests that women are more likely to experience more complex and severe injecting relating injuries and diseases, however there is limited evidence documenting differences in injecting behaviours. We examine the extent to which men and women differ in these behaviours.

**Design and Methods:** From 2009-2019, 5602 Australians who regularly inject drugs provided information about their socio-demographics, drug use history, and past month experience of four major injecting risk behaviours: receptive needle sharing; needle reuse; ancillary equipment sharing/reuse; and injecting in a site other than the arm. Multivariable logistic regression was performed to determine the predictive effect of gender on these outcomes.

**Results:** A higher proportion of women reported receptive needle sharing (10.8% vs. 8.3%), sharing/reusing ancillary equipment (60.7% vs 57.8%), and injecting in a site other than the arm (32.5% vs 17.3%). After adjusting for a range of covariates, gender only remained significant for injecting in a site other than the arm, which may suggest that women face greater difficulty locating veins or are more affected by venous insufficiency.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Our findings indicate that women may need more education about protection of vein health and safe injecting practices. Consultation with women who inject drugs is necessary to ensure harm reduction messaging effectively targets them, and that harm reduction services are safe and accessible to all consumers.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** The Illicit Drug Reporting System and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre are supported by funding by the Australian Government Department of Health under the Drug and Alcohol Program. RS has received untied educational grants from Seqirus for post-marketing surveillance of opioid medications in Australia. Funding from this organisations has now ceased, funding was for work unrelated to this project, and the funding bodies had no role in study design, analysis and reporting