

THE IMPERATIVES FOR GOING BEYOND HEALTHCARE—SOCIAL AND HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN WHO INJECT DRUGS AND THEIR CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Authors:

Manyuchi AE¹, Mabitsi M¹, Zuma N¹

¹Anova Health Institute

Background:

Most harm reduction programs provide generalized, non-differentiated healthcare to people who inject drugs (PWID). While limited funding is the main driver of this, the one-size-fits-all approach does not account for gender, age, diversity, and sub-groups within the community.

Description of model of care/intervention/program:

We developed a differentiated model of care premised on gender, age and diversity mainstreaming approach. This approach helped us provide tailored services to sub-groups of the PWID community. Of importance, when tailored services for 722 women who inject drugs in Johannesburg Health District commenced, the imperatives of going beyond providing healthcare became more evident.

Effectiveness:

Through the existing harm reduction program, we provided differentiated services for women who inject drugs encompassing dignity packs, tailored counseling, motivational interviewing, and emergency relief support. We further provided empowerment services, including training in assertiveness, coping skills and resiliency as well as vocational skills to enable women who inject drugs to generate an income. Following capacity building, women have been able to assess the quality of care and make recommendations for program optimization. Women recommended that the program actively include linkage and navigation to social welfare services to address the social determinants of health. They have also advocated for tailored services for children of PWID. Hence, tailored healthcare for HIV/TB exposed children and food parcels for the children are being provided, while educational requirements are being explored.

Conclusion and next steps:

To provide a service that is more relevant to women who inject drugs, the harm reduction program has started to explore a service package that go beyond healthcare to encompass social care. Empowerment actions will be strengthened, the needs of children of PWID identified and responded to through appropriate social care and welfare interventions.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

The authors manage a harm reduction program funded by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria through The Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA).