

PEER-DELIVERED NEEDLE AND SYRINGE PROGRAM DELIVERS REDUCED LEVEL OF RECEPTIVE SYRINGE SHARING

Authors: Mary E Harrod¹, Andrew Trist¹, Jenny Iverson²

NSW Users and AIDS Association, Sydney, Australia

Kirby Institute of Infection and Immunity in Society, UNSW, Sydney, Australia

Presenter's email: maryh@nuaa.org.au

Introduction / Issues:

Peer-delivered services are routinely acknowledged as being more accessible and relatable to people who use drugs and people who inject drugs. However, there is relatively little Australian evidence supporting this assumed knowledge. A key gap in service delivery is the absence of an identified peer workforce with many workers who have peer experience discouraged from identifying as such. The data presented here are the among the first to provide quantitative evidence of the benefits of a peer workforce.

Method / Approach:

The NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA) is a drug user organisation staffed, governed and led by people with lived experience of injecting drug use. The Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) is managed by peers and volunteers. Starting in 2015, the NUAA NSP expanded its service hours and strengthened its harm reduction training for volunteers. The results in this abstract are based on the annual NSW Needle and Syringe Enhanced Data Collection.

Key Findings:

The NUAA NSP had a total of 273 occasions of service and 115 NNEDC survey participants. Participants experienced higher levels of factors associated with RSS such as homelessness and bisexuality with a smaller proportion with the protective factor of opioid substitution therapy. NUAA participants reported a lower level of RSS (16%) compared to NSW (20%) or South Eastern Sydney LHD (21%).

Discussions and Conclusions:

The findings here are based on one survey period which showed an overall increase in RSS in NSW. This paper will explore the possible factors contributing to this increase and examine reasons why service users of the NUAA NSP did not report an increase in RSS

Implications for Practice or Policy

The data presented in this paper is among the first to provide quantitative evidence for the health benefits of peer delivered services. Implications for the expansion of the peer-delivered model in NSW will be explored.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

NUAA is primarily funded by the NSW Ministry of Health with additional project funding derived from local health authorities and research institutes. We do not receive industry funding and have no conflicts of interest.