

# HIV AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN – PREVALENCE, INCIDENTS AND TREATMENT OUTCOMES

## Authors:

Spångberg E<sup>1,2</sup>, Kåberg M<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Karolinska University Hospital, Department of Infectious Diseases, Huddinge, Sweden

<sup>2</sup>Stockholm Needle and Syringe Program, Stockholm Centre for Dependency Disorders, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>3</sup>Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

## Background:

People who inject drugs (PWID) are at high risk of HIV transmission through sharing of injection equipment. Needle and syringe programs (NSP) are vital for achieving the UNAIDS' 95-95-95 HIV targets among PWID, yet research on HIV prevalence, incidence, and continuum of care among PWID in Sweden remains scarce.

## Methods:

This study examines data from the Stockholm NSP from 2013 to 2023. All participants underwent HIV testing at enrollment and every 3-6 months in the program. Demographics, data on drug use, HIV treatment, and causes of death were recorded in the national NSP quality register.

## Results:

Among 4513 PWID enrolled, 4.4% tested HIV positive, with an average age of 44.9 years; 23% were women. Primary drugs injected were amphetamine (46%) and heroin (39%), with 32% receiving opioid agonist treatment. Annual HIV prevalence declined from 8.6% to 5.7% ( $p < 0.01$ ). A total of 17 incident HIV cases were observed, yielding an overall incidence of 0.15/100 person-years. Additionally, 25 new HIV cases were diagnosed at NSP enrollment, of which 15 were undiagnosed new cases and 10 were known cases previously diagnosed abroad. 92% received treatment, with 39% accessing treatment on-site. Among those treated, 84% achieved viral suppression (HIV RNA  $< 20$  copies/mL).

During the study period, 23.5% of HIV-positive participants died, compared to 14.4% among HIV-negative individuals ( $p < 0.001$ ), with HIV as a direct cause of death in only three cases. Overdoses and external causes were the primary contributors to mortality.

## Conclusion:

This is the first ten-year follow-up of PWID living with HIV enrolled in NSP in Sweden. The study highlights a sustained low HIV incidence and declining prevalence over time. NSP play a crucial role in identifying new HIV cases and facilitating access to care and treatment. It underscores the importance of NSP in achieving HIV targets and improving outcomes for PWID.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.