

Assessing the impact of the Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) on levels of oral health in a cohort of people who inject drugs.

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Introduction:

Oral health is an overlooked facet of overall health and wellbeing. Levels of oral health within cohorts of individuals who inject drugs compare unfavourably to the general population, with few interventions developed to attempt to address this. In addition to its role as a supervised injecting facility (SIF), MSIR is also a gateway for referral to multiple healthcare and social services. We aimed to assess the effect of MSIR use on levels of oral health within the SuperMIX cohort of people who inject drugs in Victoria, Australia.

Methods:

Utilising annual SuperMIX interview data, from March 2019 to November 2024, we used sequential conditional mean modelling (SCMM), through the application of generalised estimating equations (GEE), to estimate the total causal effect of MSIR use on self-reported levels of oral health, within the SuperMIX cohort.

Results:

A sample of n=683 participants were included in the study, 61% of whom had used MSIR during the study period. Overall, 45% of participants at baseline reported poor or very poor levels of oral health. Within the SuperMIX cohort, MSIR use, conditioned for three-year historic use of the facility, was found to have a protective effect on self-reported oral health levels (AOR=0.38; 95%CI: 0.18,0.81).

Discussions and Conclusions:

We found longer-term MSIR use resulted in improvements in self-reported oral health. Future evaluations of SIFs should incorporate oral health impacts, alongside more commonly assessed health impacts. Further research is needed to identify direct and indirect effects of MSIR use on self-reported oral health in people who inject drugs.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities:

This finding highlights the potentially beneficial role ancillary services, such as oral health screening, can play within the broader supervised injecting facility framework, warranting the inclusion of oral health impacts in prospective evaluations of SIFs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.