

The 'acceptability' of supervised injectable opioid treatment: Staff and participant reflections from the Australian Feasibility of Opioid injectable Treatment (FOpIT) study

Jake Rance¹, Carla Treloar¹

¹Centre for Social Research in Health, University of South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Presenter's email: jake.rance@unsw.edu.au

Introduction: A key challenge associated with the implementation of supervised injectable opioid treatment (SIOT) is the question its 'acceptability' among key stakeholders. Our presentation focuses on staff and participant perspectives on the implementation of Australia's first-ever SIOT trial within an outpatient opioid agonist treatment (OAT) service operating as part of a large inner-city hospital.

Method / Approach: We draw on qualitative interviews conducted with trial participants (n=12) following treatment completion, and from interviews conducted with staff (n=10) during the second year of the trial. Data were thematically analyzed using Damschroder's Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR).

Results: Following CFIR, we conceive of the trial's "inner setting" as comprising three dynamic and interactive layers: the hydromorphone clinic, the OAT service, and the inner-city hospital. Staff cited experiences of professional isolation linked to a lack of coherence and mission alignment within the inner setting (including antipathy toward SIOT itself) and the trial's lack of integration within broader governance and support structures. Among participants, the experience of sharing a waiting room with the OAT service was consistently identified as problematic, characterizing the environment as one of heightened volatility and even occasional hostility.

Discussions and Conclusions: The FOpIT study addresses a gap in the literature regarding the contextual factors that may support or hinder SIOT implementation efforts. Our preliminary findings suggest that implementing SIOT with an existing treatment framework requires both organisational support for OAT staff and clients regarding acceptance of the new program, and a thorough integration of SIOT staff within existing governance and support structures.

Implications for Practice or Policy: SIOT has the potential to change Australian drug treatment policy and invigorate clinical practice within the current opioid treatment program by offering a valuable option for those who have not benefitted from treatment with oral methadone or buprenorphine alone.

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