

# **INTRAVENOUS FENTANYL USE AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN AUSTRALIA**

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## **Introduction:**

Fentanyl is a highly potent synthetic opioid with rapid onset. Compared to other opioids, fentanyl has a significantly higher risk of overdose. Currently, little is known about the contexts and correlates of fentanyl use among people who inject drugs (PWID).

## **Methods:**

The Australian Needle Syringe Program (NSP) Survey is conducted annually at ~50 NSPs throughout Australia. Consenting PWID complete a self-administered questionnaire and provide a capillary dried blood spot for HIV and hepatitis C virus testing. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression analysis determined correlates of fentanyl use in 2014.

## **Results:**

Among n=848 PWID who injected pharmaceutical opioids (POs) in the last six months, 23% injected fentanyl, with fentanyl the main PO injected by 37% of these respondents. Compared to PO injectors who did not inject fentanyl, respondents who reported recent (last 6 months) fentanyl injection were significantly more likely to identify as Indigenous Australian (AOR 1.61; 95% CI 1.04-2.51; p=0.034), report daily or more frequent injection (AOR 1.92; 95% CI 1.30-2.83; p=0.005), inject in public locations (AOR 1.43; 95% CI 1.01-2.02; p=0.042) and experience an overdose (last 12 months) (AOR 2.16; 95% CI 1.48-3.13; p<0.001), but were significantly less likely to receptively share syringes in the last month (AOR 0.56; 95% CI 0.36-0.87; p=0.010).

## **Conclusions:**

Australian fentanyl injectors are significantly more likely to identify as Indigenous, to inject daily or more frequently, inject in public, and experience overdose. Increased access to harm reduction interventions including naloxone distribution, wheel filters and supervised injection facilities are likely to benefit this population.

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