

Prescription Vape As A Harm Reduction Initiative And Smoking Cessation Pathway Amongst Chronic Tobacco Smokers Of We Help Ourselves Residential Rehabilitation Programs - A Six Month Trial

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Background: WHOS (We Help Ourselves) provides seven alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation programs in NSW and QLD. A high percentage of clients entering the programs are current and chronic tobacco smokers. Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs) became available via prescription in 2021, giving an alternative option for chronic tobacco smokers. WHOS consulted tobacco harm reduction experts to provide an evidence base to enable informed choice of vaping as a harm reduction initiative and smoking cessation pathway.

Description of Intervention: Education sessions for GP's, managers, staff and clients were provided on the evidence on NVP as an alternative to tobacco to inform implementation. A process of NVP provision was undertaken and the choice of prescription NVP was given to clients. This intervention was introduced under a six-month internal organisational trial to assess the efficacy and uptake of NVP.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: Data was collected on 188 clients commencing NVP, during the trial period. Questionnaires were conducted prior to NVP uptake and at follow up with 71 of the clients. The findings were further enhanced by a one-day snapshot of 80 clients continuing to use NVP one month post the trial period. Client satisfaction levels were high, there were no adverse events and self-reported respiratory symptoms and overall physical health improved.

Conclusion and Next Steps: The six-month trial and snapshot found a high demand for prescription NVP amongst chronic tobacco smokers, self-reported health gains and cessation of nicotine using NVP. The findings give insight into NVPs used successfully as a harm reduction initiative and a smoking cessation pathway.

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