

Barriers & enablers to caring for people who regularly use methamphetamine – Sydney GP perspectives

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Introduction: People who regularly use methamphetamine (PWRUM) are experiencing harms to physical and psychological health[1,2,3]. It is surprising, therefore, to learn that they visit General Practitioners (GPs) more frequently than the general population[4]. There is little in the literature to help us understand GPs' opinions on caring for PWRUM and explain why these frequent attendances aren't translating into better outcomes.

Method: AB conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 GPs practicing in the Greater Sydney area about their experiences of providing general practice-based care for PWRUM. Demographic & scope of practice data were collected to ensure a broad sample. Transcripts were analysed thematically using an established framework. Levesque (2013) conceptualises access to care as depending on the "ability" of consumers to navigate a series of provider domains[5] and is therefore patient-focused. We recruited to thematic saturation.

Key Findings: GPs described a range of barriers & enablers across the domains described by Levesque (2013). This presentation will focus on the attitudinal, social and personal factors identified. Barriers included poor staff attitudes; the impact of stigma and stereotyping; and the emotional impact on the practitioner of consultations with PWRUM. Enablers included adopting a non-judgemental, harm reduction-orientated approach to patients; being flexible around how care is provided; and ensuring good continuity of care. Other factors will be briefly described.

Implications for Practice: The barriers and enablers identified by our GP participants described via a patient-focused access framework, could be used to inform improved educational content for GPs in training, established GPs and practice staff; better funding models; and new models of care that will better meet the needs of this group – relating to both methamphetamine use and the effects this can have on health in general.

References

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