

Presentation,

On the way to evaluating harm reduction programs for injecting drug users: what's "good"?

17th Conference of the European Association of Substance Abuse Research (EASAR),
15th-18th May

Abstract

Background: Harm reduction interventions or prevention programs for drug users are known as measures characterized by an attitude of acceptance towards drug consumption and serve to reduce harm or prevent damage brought about by addiction (Michels & Stöver 2012). An important goal of harm reduction measures for injecting drug users in Germany is reducing their risk of contracting blood-borne infections. Evaluating these programs is often difficult for methodological reasons. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction recommends an implementation of prevention programs in eight steps in their "drug prevention quality standards" - one of the proposed steps is program evaluation (EMCDDA 2011). However, a uniform quality standard or method for evaluating the quality of harm reduction measures in Germany is currently lacking. The fact that data collected for evaluation purposes in individual cases is considerably heterogeneous is also part of the problem.

Aims: It is necessary to compile an overview of the quality standards for harm reduction programs that have been under discussion in the past. The goal is to deduce a model from the information available that can be used for comparative assessment of these programs in future.

Method: Quality trademarks of harm reduction programs are identified in an (inter)national review of the available literature. This information collection process is complemented by a consultation of experts working in the harm reduction field. The trademarks are then compared to each other and discussed. The second step is to generate a fixed set of evaluation criteria.

Results and Conclusion:

The identified quality criteria are being discussed with relation to their (pragmatic) usefulness in future evaluation processes.

Literature:

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) (2011): European drug prevention quality standards - A manual for prevention professionals. Luxembourg, The Publications Office of the European Union

Michels, I I & Stöver, H (2012): Harm Reduction - From a Conceptual Framework to Practical Experience: The Example of Germany. Substance Use & Misuse 47, 910-922