This is the authors’ final peer reviewed (post print) version of the item published as:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30057844

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner

Copyright: 2013, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing
Do steroid users pose unique challenges for needle and syringe program (NSP) staff?

Matthew Dunn1,2, Fiona McKay1,2, Jenny Iversen4

1 School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University, Victoria, Australia
2 Centre for Health through Action on Social Exclusion (CHASE), Deakin University, Victoria, Australia
3 National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), UNSW, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
4 Kirby Institute, UNSW, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Presenter’s email address: m.dunn@deakin.edu.au

Abstract

Introduction and Aims: Steroid users are an increasing proportion of clientele at some NSPs, and are a group who predominantly engage in injecting behaviours with relatively low levels of blood-borne virus risk. The use of NSPs by steroid users to access clean injecting equipment may result in a number of challenges for NSP staff. The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of NSP staff with steroid users.

Design and Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 NSP workers. Interviews were conducted by phone, recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

Results: NSP staff indicated that steroid users are not a challenging group, though they can have low levels of engagement with staff and other services offered by NSPs. Most steroid users, at first contact with NSPs, have low levels of knowledge regarding injecting and safe injecting practices. Most steroid users are referred to NSPs by steroid-using peers. Steroid users acquire a large volume of injecting equipment, though this occurs infrequently due to the cyclical nature of steroid use; peer distribution of equipment is common. NSP staff do not feel well informed about the substances this group use.

Discussion and Conclusions: Previous research has shown that steroid users have low levels of blood-borne viruses compared to other people who inject drugs; as such, the continued supply of clean injecting equipment to this group should occur. Injecting steroids and other performance and image enhancing drugs pose other health risks, thus NSP staff are well placed to provide education to this group.

Please select your preferred form of presentation

- [x] Oral presentation
- [ ] Poster presentation
- [ ] Workshop