Attitudes about Harm Reduction Strategies Among People who Inject Drugs

Mariah Davidson  | Dr. Gary Dick, PhD  | College of Allied Health Sciences | Department of Social Work

**Background**
Injection drug use has been associated with negative health consequences and increased rates of HIV acquisition for people who inject drugs. Harm Reduction is the idea that negative consequences can be lessened without requiring the person to discontinue drug use, some techniques include syringe exchange, Methadone maintenance treatment or Suboxone treatment. Caracole, Inc., a nonprofit organization providing case management and prevention services to those living with HIV, provides syringe exchange services and Narcan distribution to people who inject drugs every Thursday evening.

**Methods**
A survey link was provided to case managers at an AIDS service organization to administer to clients. Paper surveys were administered to volunteer participants at a syringe exchange program at the same organization.

**Purpose**
To explore attitudes regarding Harm Reduction techniques among people who inject drugs. This will help to clarify the needs of this population by surveying their thoughts and feelings.

**Participants**
Demographic data (n=7):
Age range: 25-54 years
Males: 6 Females:1
Health Data:
HIV Dx: 2
Hepatitis Dx: 3

**Data Analysis**
Consisted of frequency count and content analysis.

**Equipment**
A short ten question survey was administered via online link. The survey was also printed and handed out at a syringe service event.

**Results**

Attitudes regarding Harm Reduction
Have used HR: 7
Positive attitudes: 5
(Very helpful:2, Helpful:3)
Neutral attitudes: 2
Negative attitudes: 0

**Conclusions & Future work**
From this group surveyed, there are overall positive attitudes about Harm Reduction strategies among people who inject drugs. The difficulty around participation speaks to a bigger issue; the stigma around injection drug use that makes people hesitant to talk about it. Further work could be done in differentiating attitudes about syringe exchange versus Methadone maintenance treatment.

**Limitations**
The sample surveyed was too small to draw any meaningful conclusions about the data because the target population was difficult to reach.

**References**