

Recent changes in needle sharing among intravenous injection heroin abuses in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Rapid increase human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in 1987 triggered preventive information campaigns which became quite extensive in 1989. Counseling programmes were provided in drug dependence treatment services all over the country. Three serial cross sectional surveys on knowledge, attitude and needle sharing behaviour of male intravenous injecting heroin abusers admitted in a large drug dependence treatment hospital in the suburb of Bangkok, the Thanyarak Hospital, were carried out in April and November 1988 and November 1989. The sampling were 182, 156 and 212 cases consecutively.

The knowledge of the groups on HIV infection were very limit and vague. Almost 2/3 could express fear of the disease without understanding the cause or mechanism of the disease. About 1/3 defined the disease by its incurability. However most knew that needle sharing, sexual relation and promiscuity were risk behaviour and the use of condom could prevent contracting the infection. Needle sharing by lending or borrowing declined progressively within studied period. The latter was more remarkable than the former. Needle washing before injection increased slightly from 68.3% to 82.4 % while washing after injection were consistently high at about 88-92%. Report on "afraid of HIV infection" as a reason for needle washing increased from 10.2% to 22.4%. The change were surprisingly low compared to reports on "afraid of needle block" which changed from about 58% to 64%. Although there were without doubt improving changes in reduction of needle sharing, the extent was quite limited. A fair amount of needle sharing still persisted.

Key words: Heroin abuses, needle sharing, Intravenous injection.

WHO Consultation Meeting on Prevention of Drug infection, Genva. 11-14 December 1989.