

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF TREATMENT OUTCOMES FOR PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

Executive Summary

The objective of this research was to evaluate the treatment outcomes for psychotropic substance abusers attending Substance Abuse Clinics (SACs) and Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs).

Between June 2008 and April 2010, 145 substance abusers were recruited into the research project, 124 from SACs and 21 from CCPSAs. Only 15 (10%) participants received the one-year follow-up assessment; the majority of the participants either refused to be interviewed or could not be traced. Amongst these 15 participants, none of them received the two-year follow-up assessment. Information on the treatment modality of each participant was held at individual SACs and was obtained from their case notes at one-year (N = 124) and two-year follow-up (N = 44).

Ketamine was the most common lifetime abused drug among participants, followed by amphetamine/ice and Midazolam/Nimetazepam/Zopiclone/Imovane. The mean age of onset for psychotropic substance misuse was 22.2 years with a duration of 7.2 years. The most common psychiatric disorder was psychosis (37.1%). More than 90% of SAC patients were offered medication during the treatment period and 25% were referred to an occupational therapist, a medical social worker or a clinical psychologist. Retention rates in the first and second year of SAC treatment were 71.8% and 23.4%, respectively. The possible factors influencing treatment dropout included not suffering from psychosis and not receiving a prescription from the treating psychiatrists. However, as most of the participants dropped out of the study, case note review was not sufficient for measuring treatment outcome. Thus, for future studies, SACs and other service providers should use a standardized outcome measure such as the Christo Inventory for Substance-Misuse Services.