

BENEFITS OF TAKE-HOME DOSES AMONG PATIENTS RECEIVING METHADONE MAINTENANCE TREATMENT IN KACHIN STATE, MYANMAR: A HOPEFUL PROSPECT AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

Aung M¹, Let Z¹, Pan S¹, Thaw M¹, Boulet R¹

¹ Médecins du Monde (France) – Myanmar Mission

Background:

Médecins du Monde (Mdm) has been providing comprehensive harm reduction services to people who inject drugs (PWID) in Kachin State, Myanmar, including the provision of oral methadone.

In October 2018, Mdm started Regular Take Home Dose (RTHD) Program, with 50 pilot patients at *Hopin-township* Methadone Center providing fixed daily dose of Methadone for one week.

Objective:

This study seeks to examine the impact of Methadone-RTHD on patients' treatment outcome and quality of life, with the general objective to highlight the need for service delivery changes to improve access to methadone.

Methodology:

It was a mix-method cross-sectional study. Quantitative data analysis was done using the existing data collected among 50 pilot clients (between 17th October 2018 and 31st December 2019).

Qualitative interviews were also conducted with 24 active RTHD patients with questionnaires based on Quality of Life (QoL) scale.

Results:

Overall, 50 pilot patients have been taking RTHD for average 265 days. Treatment retention rate was 66% with 33 patients who have been maintained in the treatment program for average 354 days.

71% (n=17) of interview respondents declared that they became more aware of the benefits of taking methadone and received adequate information to counter any common myths. Majority of patients (n=19) were motivated to be on RTHD as it offers them more time at work. They were able to participate and interact better at work and in their community, regain confidence, and the support of family and friends.

Conclusion:

RTHD provides PWIDs more control of their time, personal lives as well as longer access to methadone. It should be carried out with flexible criteria during Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. Thus, after March 2020, Myanmar issued THD exceptionally for 14 days to reduce risks of Covid-19 transmission, which could be a subject to further study with relatively higher sample size.

Disclosure of Interest:

Médecins du Monde's harm reduction program in Kachin receives the funding from Save the Children, the Principal Recipient of the Global Fund.