

USE OF PREVENTIVE AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS BY INJECTING DRUG USERS IN GEORGIA (DATA FROM INTEGRATED BIO- BEHAVIORAL SURVEY, 2022)

Authors:

Kochlamazashvili M¹, Kamkamidze G¹, Kajaia M¹, Gulbiani L¹, Abzianidze T¹, Gogia M², Khonelidze I³, Petriashvili I³, Butsashvili M¹

¹ Health Research Union, ² Georgian Harm Reduction Network, ³ National Center for Disease Control and Public Health

Background: Georgia is a country with high prevalence of injection drug use. To decrease the transmission of infections (HIV, Hepatitis B and C) and overdose mortality in people who inject drugs (PWID), there are programs in the country offering different prevention services. The goal of the study was to evaluate the coverage of preventive and treatment programs among PWID participating in Integrated Bio-Behavioral Surveillance Survey (IBSS) conducted in 2022 in Georgia.

Methods:

Cross-sectional study was conducted using Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) method in seven major cities of Georgia. Face-to-face interviewing was used to collect data with structured questionnaire. Coverage of the preventive programs among PWID was evaluated by pre-determined UNGASS (United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS) indicators. The Chi square or Student's t-test were performed to assess associations between using preventive programs with socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics.

Results:

IBSS survey covered 2005 respondents aged 18-64. The majority of study participants were > 40 years old (63.2%) and males (98.6%). 60.4% of respondents had university degree and 58.7% were unemployed. The majority of PWID (77.2%) knew where to access needles/syringe program (NSP). The coverage by prevention programs among PWID was 46.4%. Minimal coverage of preventives program was reported by 29.5% and full coverage - by 30.4% of PWID. The range of prevention program coverage was different between cities. The coverage was higher among employed PWID (50.5% vs 44.1%, p=0.006). 62.3% of PWID had never received any treatment or specific assistance related to drug use. 83.2% of respondents that are currently treated are on substitution therapy with Methadone/Suboxone.

Conclusion:

The coverage of preventive and treatment programs among PWID is low. It is very important to enhance educational activities among PWID about available services.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.