

ONLINE HARM REDUCTION SERVICE PROVISION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM YOUTH RISE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER WORKSHOP

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Background:

People who use drugs (PWUD) are at higher risk of HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV), and overdose death (OD). Harm reduction (HR) programs that have been shown to prevent HIV, HCV, and OD among PWUD but these programs are not officially endorsed by most governments and accesses HR services in many jurisdictions can be limited. As the Internet is becoming increasingly important in both the sale of drugs and the availability of drug information, it is critical that HR services keep up with trends and offer services remotely or online. The purpose of this study is to describe the researchers' experience with the development and implementation of a youth-led Train-the-Trainer Workshop for Young People in Online Harm Reduction Service Provision (OHRSP).

Methods:

Online tools such as google survey, mentimeter, zoom discussions were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from participants before, during and at the end of a 3-day online workshop on OHRSP for young people. The pre- and post-survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The online sessions were recorded and coded and qualitative content analysis was carried out.

Results:

The workshop had 15 key population representatives from countries including Ghana, Nepal, Pakistan, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Peru, Kenya, Costa Rica, Lithuania, Lebanon, Morocco and Uganda. The participants described the importance of, including challenges and opportunities, online PWUD-peer consultations. One of the challenges highlighted was censorship/bans of social media platform for HR advocacy and services. Increased utilization of services, addressing stigmas and social distancing were some of the discussed opportunities in OHRSP.

Conclusion:

Finding highlights that OHRSP is an approach that harm reduction organizations should consider implementing. OHRSP could speed up delivery of services, assist in reaching PWUD communities that are historically poorly reached, and ensure that services can be offered when offline provision cannot. However, more work is needed to examine the advantages of online outreach efforts, particularly as youth-friendly, inclusive and accessible services.

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