

An International Perspective on Stigma and Substance Use Disorder

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Disclosure Information (Required)

Stigma, SUD and COVID-19 pandemic

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4:30 PM – 5:30 PM

◆ No Disclosure



Learning Objectives

- ◆ Impact of COVID-19 on the people we serve
- ◆ Exploration of the link between COVID-19 impact and stigma

Criteria:

only or more prevalent in our population
previously associated with stigma

What is stigma

Dynamic multidimensional, multilevel phenomenon

3 levels:

- ◆ structural (laws, regulations, policies)
- ◆ public (attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals and groups)
- ◆ self-stigma (internalized negative stereotypes).

A phenomenon difficult to measure

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2016. Ending Discrimination Against People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders: The Evidence for Stigma Change. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23442>

Stigma and health professionals

Barriers to access help

2. Claire Gerada. Doctors Identity and barriers. The BJP 2022, 220, 7-9.

UN Human Rights 1948 (30 articles)

- ◆ 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- ◆ 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.
- ◆ 5 (ass 7, 8,9,10): No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- ◆ 23 (1): Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment...
- ◆ 25 (1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including ... medical care and necessary social services...

WHO 2021 findings on pandemic

- ◆ Innovation in prevention and treatment **BUT** closure of non-essential health services and movement restrictions led to sudden and uncoordinated discontinuation of service.
- ◆ Prescribing has been simplified in OAT, use of vending machines and postal services to distribute sterile needles and syringes.
- ◆ Non-medical use of cannabis and sedatives has increased globally.
- ◆ In North America spike in opioid overdose deaths since pandemic.
- ◆ Drug markets quickly recovered, some trafficking dynamics accelerated.
- ◆ Increasing economic hardship along with radical shifts in technology and dramatic alterations in social habits are likely to affect drug patterns in the long run.

3. World Drug Report 2021 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.XI.8).

EMCDDA

- ◆ 2020: signs of decline in some forms of drug use; many services forced to close or restrict access; new measures for hygiene and social distancing; shift towards greater use of telemedicine.
- ◆ 2021 (Jan-March): drug market remarkably resilient; levels of availability and use relatively stable; services returned to operation from June 2020 onwards; reduced accessibility of telemedicine for certain client groups and associated challenges for treatment retention; school closures and online schooling proved challenging for implementing prevention.

4. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2021), Impact of COVID-19 on drug markets, use, harms and drug services in the community and prisons: results from an EMCDDA trendspotter study, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

EMCDDA cont.

Online survey data from people who self-report drug use suggest:

- ◆ higher consumption of alcohol and greater experimentation with psychedelics and ketamine.
- ◆ those using drugs occasionally prior to COVID-19 may have reduced or even ceased their use, but more-regular users may have increased their drug consumption.

5. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2021), European Drug Report 2021: Trends and Developments, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

Network of Early Career Professionals working in the area of Addiction Medicine

28 respondents from all WHO regions: “stigma in some form had affected addiction care during the COVID 19 pandemic”

- ◆ Policy: MH and addiction wards repurposed into COVID-19 wards, with little future planning for addiction services.
- ◆ Access to services: communities hold individuals with SUDs morally responsible for their illness, PWUD questioned and fined as police believed them to be in breach of lockdown policies.
- ◆ Street Based People and Special Population Groups: people in shelters were provided with essentials but inadequate planning for PWUD.

6. Dannatt L, et al 2021. The Impact of Stigma on Treatment Services for People With Substance Use Disorders During the COVID-19 Pandemic—Perspectives of NECPAM Members. Front. Psychiatry 12:634515. doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2021.634515

ISAM work

- ◆ Narasimha et al. Experience from eight countries. Harm reduction and abstinence-based models for treatment of substance use disorders during COVID-19 pandemic: A global perspective. BJPsychInt-21-0035.R1.
- ◆ ISAM webinars during 2020, global surveys and position paper

Drug Related Deaths 2020, UK

- ◆ 4,561 drug-related deaths in England and Wales in 2020; highest since records began in 1993, and 3.8% higher than in 2019.
- ◆ Rates of drug-related poisoning were 60.9% higher in 2020 (79.5 deaths per million).
- ◆ Rate increasing every year since 2012; increase from 2019 not statistically significant.
- ◆ 1,339 drug-related deaths in Scotland; highest since records began in 1996 and 5% more than in 2019.

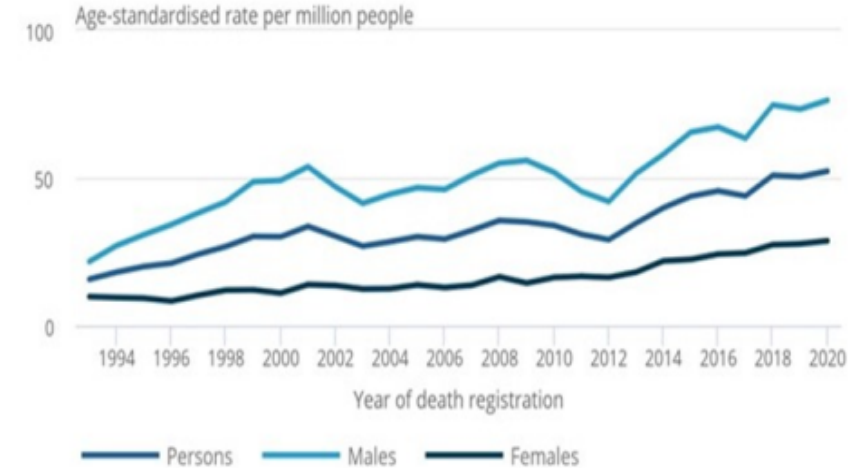
7. Office National Statistics, 3/8/2021

Figure 2: Rates of drug misuse deaths increased in 2020

Age-standardised mortality rates for deaths related to drug misuse, by sex, England and Wales, registered between 1993 and 2020

Figure 2: Rates of drug misuse deaths increased in 2020

Age-standardised mortality rates for deaths related to drug misuse, by sex, England and Wales, registered between 1993 and 2020



WHO 2021 suggestions

- ◆ Prioritize PWUD and with DUD for COVID-19 screening and vaccination because of their health vulnerability.
- ◆ Allocate sufficient funding in post-COVID-19 budgets for prevention and treatment (dedicated percentage) and HIV-related issues.
- ◆ Novel approaches need to be evaluated to better assess their effectiveness.
- ◆ Post-pandemic recovery plans for communities of PWUD and communities engaged – or at risk of engaging – in illicit drug cultivation and production (housing, food supply, economic assistance and health insurance).

Analysis

- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Closure/requisition of units
- ◆ Lack of access to health services
- ◆ Mobility restrictions/penalties
- ◆ Enhanced accommodation
- ◆ Access to vaccination
- ◆ Economic hardship
- ◆ Increased deaths

Evaluation, risk of lower standards, neglect of needs, exaggerating barriers
Lack of user's voice, public stigma

Public and personalised stigma

Structural stigma

Time limited/evaluation/strategic approach

Special delivery options
Poor become poorer/no access to jobs

Structural stigma

Final Takeaways/Summary

- ◆ Has COVID-19 increased stigma in SUD? Difficult to ascertain.
- ◆ Presence and impact of stigma difficult to establish and measure.

For example:

- ◆ Are increased deaths due to worsening of stigma or long-term disinvestment in prevention and treatment which in turn is associated to increased stigma (all 3 levels).

- ◆ Aware
- ◆ Alert
- ◆ Assertive

Thank you

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References

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2016. Ending Discrimination Against People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders: The Evidence for Stigma Change. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23442>
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7. Office National Statistics, 3/8/2021