Funding country: United Kingdom
Project starting year: 2009
Project ending year: 2010
Area(s) of research: Prevalence, incidence and patterns of drug use, Consequences of drug use

Objectives:
The drug using population of the UK is ageing, the first aim of this study was to ascertain whether this demographic change is reflected in the age at which drug users in drug treatment are dying. The second aim was to ascertain whether there were differences in the causes of death by age; more specifically, whether there was a significant difference in the proportion of drug related deaths and non-drug related deaths comparing those aged less than 40 and those aged 40 and over. Finally, we relate these findings to policy developments which are currently occurring in the UK.

Scientific discipline(s) involved: Demography, Epidemiology

Initial identified needs:
In 2001, the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) initiated a plan to reduce the number of drug related deaths in response to concerns raised by the ACMD. Clearly these intentions are laudable, and reducing the number of drug related deaths continues to be a priority. However in the UK, the term ‘drug related death’ only includes those arising from acute drug toxicity and mental and behavioural disorders due to drug use. Drug related deaths constitute a minority of all deaths of drug users and only represent a proportion of all deaths related to drug use; deaths from conditions known to be associated with drug use, for example, hepatitis C, aspiration pneumonia, deep vein thrombosis and endocarditis, are excluded from official figures on drug related deaths. Preliminary investigations show that drug users dying from drug related deaths tend to be younger than those who die from other causes.

Performed by: Center for Public Health
Funded by:

Summary references:

Website:

Published reference(s):