

## **WORK DEVELOPMENT ORDERS: A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE TREATMENT OF PATIENTS WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS ....OR MONEY FOR JAM?**

P Bowden<sup>1</sup>, C Hillary<sup>2</sup>, P Novotna<sup>3</sup>, C Newman<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Drug Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, <sup>2</sup>Population Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, <sup>3</sup>Legal Aid NSW

**Introduction and Aims:** Currently, \$216M in debts has been accumulated by residents of Western Sydney as a result of fines. The poorest socio-economic areas are responsible for the most debt, yet inability to pay attracts more fines and the poorest are caught in a trap. Our Drug Health patients are in this space. Since stress associated with legal problems leads to poorer health outcomes, Western Sydney LHD and Legal Aid partnered to reduce fine debt for Drug Health patients by increasing uptake of Work Development Orders (WDOs). WDOs reduce fine debt in return for participation in treatment for substance use.

**Method:** In 2015, baseline referral rates were identified and Drug Health staff were surveyed via on-line survey and focus groups to identify knowledge and attitudes to WDOs. Staff then received training and support. In 2016, staff were re-surveyed and referral rates and attitudes were compared with baseline.

**Key findings:** Staff who did not use WDO's held values-related as well as practical concerns about them. After training, WDO uptake increased, with participation in some teams greater than others. Factors which clinicians said influenced their participation in WDOs included previous positive experiences with WDOs, duration of client treatment and the presence of a WDO 'champion'.

**Discussion and Policy Implications:** WDOs offer a practical way of helping patients reduce fine debt and improve psychological and physical health. Future research could explore whether WDOs also enhance treatment motivation. State-wide implementation could enhance WDO uptake by incorporating fine-debt questions into patient assessment and by providing standardised procedures to assist clinicians in their judicious application.