

PREPARING PRESCRIPTION OPIATES FOR INJECTION: UNDERSTANDING PREFERENCES AND PRACTICES

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Introduction: There are two methods for preparation of OxyContin tablets for injection: hot (similar to that used in preparation of heroin) and cold. Research has shown that the cold method, which utilises a wheel filter, is physically safer and extracts greater quantities of opiates. The wheel filter prevents uptake of particles greater than 0.22 µm, preventing these particles from becoming trapped in veins or building up around critical organs. However, despite these benefits, many clients of the Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) continued to use heat. This study explores the preferred methods of Oxy preparation among people who inject opiates and participant recommendations for educating users about safer injecting practices.

Method: Thirty-three clients from MSIC participated in qualitative interviews in 2013. Participants were asked about their experiences and perceptions on a range of themes relevant to opiate injecting use. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using NVivo.

Key Findings: Preparation methods were commonly learned from other users. There were strong preferences for heat due to the additional time involved in cold preparation. Trust was also an issue; participants were more likely to listen to peers than harm reduction workers.

Discussions and Conclusions: Health education and promotion for safer ways to prepare tablets for injection, such as how to use a wheel filter, is likely to have greater impact when delivered by peer workers. Partnerships between harm reduction workers and peer workers may be beneficial in delivering new information and promoting safer ways to inject.

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