

KNOWLEDGE OF NALOXONE AND TAKE-HOME NALOXONE PROGRAMS AMONG A SAMPLE OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN AUSTRALIA

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Introduction and Aims: Opioid overdose is a significant public health problem in Australia. Take-home naloxone programs have been established recently in most Australian jurisdictions, to varying degrees, with a view to preventing deaths associated with opioid overdose. In this paper we examine knowledge of, and attitudes towards, take-home naloxone programs in samples of people who inject drugs (PWID) recruited as part of the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) over the period 2013-2016.

Design and Methods: Data were drawn from structured questionnaires administered during IDRS PWID surveys. A specific module on naloxone knowledge has been administered since 2013. Chi-square tests were used to compare binary descriptive outcomes such as employment status between years, t-tests or non-parametric equivalents for continuous outcomes such as age. Odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) were generated through logistic regression to compare across states/territories.

Results: Analyses of data from 2013-2014 showed that the large majority of PWID respondents reported having heard about naloxone, and almost all correctly reported how naloxone functions. Reports of having received training in naloxone administration increased between 2013 and 2014 as did the relatively rare but increasing reports of naloxone administration after having been trained. A substantial minority of the entire sample reported knowing about take home naloxone programs, and this knowledge increased between 2013 and 2014. Significant variations were noted between jurisdictions, with knowledge highest in those jurisdictions that had programs in 2013 or 2014.

Discussion and Conclusions: Work to expand access to naloxone has now commenced with small-scale take home naloxone programs aimed at PWID recently established and operating in most Australian jurisdictions. The programs appear to have had impacts on consumer knowledge, attitudes and behaviour that will be further documented through analyses of 2016 data when they become available.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Take-home naloxone is an important component of overdose response in Australia, and further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that all people at risk of overdose know how to access the drug.

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