Heroin Consumption and the HIV Epidemic in LAC

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Prevalence of HIV infection among IDU’s, 2009

The situation in the region by the end of 2009

- 29% of an estimated 2 million IDU’s in LAC are infected with HIV (Mathers et al., 2008)

- In PR 40% of new cases in men and 27% in women in 2006 resulted from injection drug use (CDC, 2009).

- It is estimated that in Argentina 49% of IDU’s are infected (highest prevalence in the world).

- The proportion of HIV cases resulting from IDU’s is estimated at 42% in ARG, 33% in URU and 10% in PAR.
The situation in the Region: Trends

- Between 1995 and 2007 the IDU's in Brazil fell from 27.5% to 10% as a category of exposure to HIV among adult males and from 21.9% to almost 4% in adult women. Concomitant increase in crack use.

- The drug most frequently used for injection is cocaine, but there could be as many as 70,000 heroin users.

- There appears to be an association between injectable drug use, traffic routes, and recombination viral subtypes:
  - Diverse mosaic of Thai B/India C in Southern China
  - CRF03_AB in the former Soviet states
  - CRF014_BG in Spain and Portugal
  - CRF035_AD in Iran and Afghanistan
  - CRF012 BF in ARG, PER, BOL, URU
  - CRF028 BF and CRF029 BF en Brazil
  - CRF031 BC the south of Brazil

The heroin consumption situation: Information Sources

- Data from treatment centers that perform treatment for opiate addiction (Bermuda, Puerto Rico, México, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina)

- Data from emergency services (trauma and urgent medical care) forensic medicine (Costa Rica, traveling from Venezuela)

- National addiction surveys (selection biases)

- Other population surveys (observation bias)

- National monitoring systems drug use (such as, Sistema de Vigilancia Epidemiológica de las Adicciones (SISVEA) in México)

- Police tracking of distribution routes (aerial and terrestrial from Colombia, by land in Guatemala and México)
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Distribution of IDU’s in treatment by state: Mexico, 2007

Percent of injectable drug consumption, México: National and Northern border. 2007

Users of intravenous drugs in Mexico, 2007

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UDI 15.5%. (10,030)
Epidemiological information gaps and public health challenges

• Incomplete knowledge, lack of information disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic status

• Clues indicating injectable drug use in the English-speaking Caribbean (high prevalence of HCV) despite assumption that it is not a transit area for heroin

• Indications of an increase in heroin consumption (>3,000 “hard” users and nearly 200 “shoot galleries” in Ciudad Juarez)

• STI and blood-borne infections highly prevalent among this population

• Risk for primary infection, re-infection, appearance of recombinant forms and development of resistance

• Need for epidemiologic surveys and social-ethnographic studies to better understand the phenomenon in LAC.