
REPORTS OF THE COURSE

GROUP 1

EFFECTIVE TREATMENT MODALITIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR INCARCERATED DRUG USERS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 170th International Training Course held by the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI) is aimed at creating a platform that offers international views regarding improving effective treatment of illicit drug users. During group discussions, which are a major component of the above-mentioned training programme, participants were called upon to express their expert opinion on the following topics: A. Treatment Methods in Prison; B. Coordination and Cooperation between Prison and Community Organizations. Illicit drug users are viewed as the most at-risk population with multiple health problems encompassing the physical, mental, social and psychological dimensions as a result of prolonged precarious lifestyles. Furthermore, this population's risk factors amplify when entering correctional settings

II. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Challenges were noted to differ from country to country, yet several similarities were agreed upon during extensive discussion sessions:

1. **Lack of Trained Personnel:** Treating drug users within correctional settings requires adequately trained personnel to effectively and efficiently provide optimal treatment interventions. However, it has been unanimously noted that lack of knowledge and training among the correctional staff in specific rehabilitation approaches will contribute to ineffective treatments and high relapse/reoffending rates.
2. **Specialized Assessments:** Illicit drug users require specific assessments to identify the risks and needs, because they have multifactorial social problems and chronic health disorders. However, comprehensive assessment tools that focus on detecting the multiple risks are lacking. Furthermore, the group noted that most existing assessment tools are not gender and age specific.
3. **Diversity of Drug Use Programmes:** Evidence-based treatments such as relapse prevention programmes, cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational interviewing are actively utilized within the correctional settings. However, since drug users have multifactorial health disorders, the public health approach of harm reduction is lacking within most correctional treatments as most programmes are not diverse. Additionally, currently implemented programmes lack systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess effectiveness of interventions and training.

4. **Lack of Community Support and Partnership:** Considering that the UNODC strongly advocates for alternative treatment for drug users, the lack of strong community support and partnership with correctional services decreases the success rate of treatment, as an extensive part of drug use treatment is the provision of community-based treatment programmes.

III. BEST PRACTICES

1. **Training:** Mandela Rules 75-76 emphasize training for correctional officers. Based on best practices discussed, it is suggested that every country is required to conduct a training-needs analysis to have adequately trained personnel for drug treatment programmes. Training should focus on enhancing assessment skills and optimal service delivery. Training strategies should comprise the following:
 - a. Specific training from external expertise: (selecting officers to attend academic training at universities and professional training bodies to obtain relevant qualifications). Hong Kong Correctional Services Department provides for selected officers to obtain certificates in Social Work for Correctional Service.
 - b. In-service training provided by internal experienced staff and external experts (legal, medical, social, community-based organizations, like DARC in Japan).
2. **Drug Use Assessments:** Risk and needs assessments are critical for early detection. Assessment tools for drug users should be able to assess the risk of relapse and reoffending in order to match programme intervention intensity, while also detecting the risks of infectious diseases (HIV, TB, and Hepatitis) and mental health disorders. The UNODC recommends the use of the SBIRT approach as a screening protocol to identify people with drug use in non-specialized healthcare settings such as corrections. The approach has been proven effective by SAMHSA (US)¹, and it allows flexibility in utilizing assessment tools. Furthermore, ASSIST², DAST 20³ and C-SRRS⁴ are considered as appropriate tools to use during screening.
3. **Diversified Programme Options:** The unique multifactorial risks and needs of drug users require diversified rehabilitation programmes as follows.

Psychological	Social	Pharmacology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (use virtual reality stimulation and role play-Dr Zhang) - Self Help Groups - 12 steps programmes - Behavioural Therapy- positive reinforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family involvement (Probation Office Family Programme-Japan) - Religious support / activities - Art, Physical Exercise, Cultural Activities - Educational and Vocational skills - Alternative programme (Weekend Release-Samoa) - Cooperation with external bodies in prison (DARC-Japan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detoxification treatment (Buprenorphine-Mauritius) - Substitution treatment and Maintenance therapy (Methadone-Mauritius) - Related Pharmaceutical treatment (Mental Health Treatment-Japan / Brazil)

It is suggested that voluntary treatment is the ultimate goal; however, mandatory treatment for drug users within correctional facilities is equally important under special circumstances, such as life-threatening

¹ Pg. 4 Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment in Behavioral Healthcare, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US

² Pg. 21 International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders, UNODC

³ Pg. 363-371 The Drug Abuse Screening Test, Addictive Behaviours, Skinner. H.A. (1982)

⁴ Development of the Correctional Stimulant Relapse Risk Scale, Yamamoto *et al* (2011)

situations, etc., as stipulated in the Drug Dependence Treatment: Interventions for Drug Users in Prison by the UNODC⁵.

4. **Community-Based Partnership:** Mandela Rules 107-108 support the early involvement of community-based organizations in treatment programmes, in order to coordinate the offenders' treatment effectively. Community partnership should be adopted as follows:
 - a. The throughcare approach provides for continuous assessment and assistance from the first contact with the criminal justice system for drug users. It entails providing pre-sentencing, during incarceration and aftercare treatment and support from community and governmental agencies. There is a publication validating the effectiveness of this treatment method in the U.K.⁶
 - b. Aftercare is an essential component to assist drug users to reintegrate into society after release. The Volunteer Probation Officer approach in Japan could be considered as a good practice because community members actively participate in the aftercare of drug users by establishing halfway house services.
 - c. Public awareness is instrumental to enhancing effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes for drug users as it helps appeal for acceptance and support in the community. A good practice is engaging community stakeholders through utilizing channels such as social media, publications, symposiums and rehabilitation ambassadors (Rehabilitation mascots, Hogo Chan and Sara Chan).

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the best practices mentioned above are evidence based and are reported to have great impact on the treatment of drug users in several countries. However, it is also argued that ensuring effectiveness of recommended treatment interventions requires a systematic evaluation process. Additionally, gender and age sensitivity should be focal considerations during the assessment and treatment phases.

The most important recommendation is for policymakers to acknowledge and align existing criminal justice laws with current public health policies, including harm reduction strategies (Portugal is an international benchmark)⁷.

⁵ Pg. 28 Drug Dependence Treatment: Interventions for Drug Users in Prison, UNODC

⁶ Pg. 60 Drug Dependence Treatment: Interventions for Drug Users in Prison, UNODC

⁷ Ms Anja Busse Presentation on 3 Sept 2018 Treatment for People with Drug Use Disorders in Contact with the Criminal Justice System: Alternatives to Conviction or Punishment