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Women who inject drugs: Investigate the barriers accessing the harm reduction services and evaluation of services from the perspective of the women who inject drugs

Ketevan Sikharulidze

Ilia State University, Georgia

Aim: Stigmatization, vulnerability and high risk for spreading of blood borne infections, this are the least outcomes for people injecting drugs. In 2014, the study in Georgia for estimation of size of Injecting Drug Users (IDU) showed that the number of IDUs made up 49,700 individuals - (49,208 – 50,192) for the general population. We don't know the exact number of WWID. No female-oriented drug treatment programs are available in Georgia. As a result, females constitute only about 1-4% of patients in drug treatment facilities. The study aims to investigate the barriers accessing the harm reduction services for WWID evaluation of services from the perspective of WWID and identify their needs and gaps to help them access the existing services.

Method: We conducted individual qualitative interviews and focus groups discussions with Georgian WWID in order to characterize need, treatment or service satisfaction. 2 focus groups and 14 in-depth interviews in 6 different cities of Georgia. All interviews and focus group discussions were voice-recorded,

transcribed and analyzed with the qualitative software Nvivo 11.

Results: Results showed that WWID are one of the most vulnerable and most stigmatized groups in Georgia. Factors that infringe on WWID' rights and reduce their access to health care include punitive policies, discrimination by police, health care providers and by their peer male drug users. The intense social stigma attached to drug use by women, an absence of sexual and reproductive health services and general poor access to effective drug treatment. Conclusions: Study shows the necessity for women-oriented harm reduction services. Specific treatment and consultation centers are required for high risk pregnant women. Spreading positive messages throughout society to reduce stigma is vital Improve referral system for harm reduction facilities. Improve geographical and financial arability. It is crucial to implement comprehensive harm reduction interventions in women's prisons.

e: ketasikharulidze@gmail.com



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