



The landscape of prescription drug misuse in the UK

Dr David M Wood

Consultant Physician and Clinical Toxicologist, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and King's Health Partners

Reader in Clinical Toxicology
King's College London



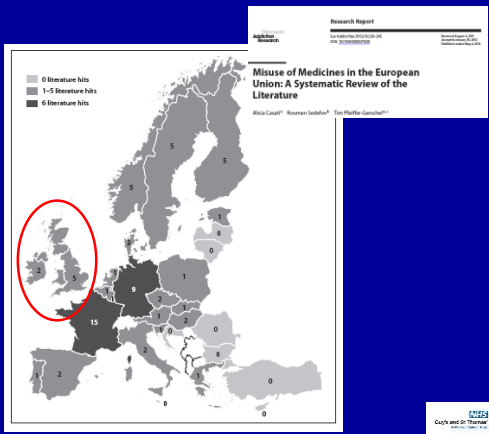
Funding and Conflicts of Interest

Euro-DEN and Euro-DEN Plus

- 2013-2015: The Euro-DEN project had financial support from the DPIP/ISEC Programme of the European Union
- 2015 onwards: The Euro-DEN Plus Project has received support from EMCDDA since August 2015

Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Control Center

- Grants and statistical assistance with analysis of data from UK Internet surveys and web monitoring surveys
- Honorarium to attend and present at annual RADARS scientific meetings in 2014, 2015 and 2016



Type of drug: The most prevalent diverted drugs are opioids and benzodiazepines. Increasing amounts of gabapentin and pregabalin are being diverted. Cognitive enhancers could be susceptible to diversion in the future. Further attention needs to be given to the misuse of codeine in over-the-counter (OTC) preparations as a precursor to the misuse of prescription opioids.

Prevalence: There is a common perception that prevalence of DISM is increasing. The prevalence of females who abuse prescription-only medicines (POMs) is greater than males, the converse of traditional drug abuse. Quantifying the extent of DISM is difficult owing to a lack of suitable monitoring systems.

The number of people seeking treatment for addiction to prescription medicines has reportedly increased. As with other drug users those using prescription drugs often have other mental health problems to cope with. DISM via the Internet has appealing attributes to a wide demographic of people.



DISM: Diversion and Illicit Supply of Medicines



UK population level data

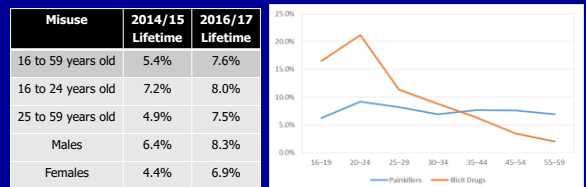
- Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW)
 - Previously the British Crime Survey
 - Survey of 16 to 59 year olds
- Longitudinal data available on 'tranquillisers' only

	Drug	Life-time use	Pattern of life-time use over last decade	Last year use
16 to 59 years old	Tranquilliser	2.9%	Stable (2.6-3.2%)	0.4%
	Any drug	34.2%	Decreasing (36.7 to 34.2%)	8.5%
16 to 24 years old	Tranquilliser	2.2%	Stable (1.8-2.6%)	0.6%
	Any drug	35.7%	Decreasing (42.0 to 35.7%)	19.2%



UK population level data: prescription painkiller misuse

- From 2014/15 CSEW survey following question included:
 - "Have you taken prescription-only painkillers not prescribed to you, which you took only for the feeling or experience it gave you?"



UK population level data: prescription painkiller misuse

- 83% misusing painkillers had not used other drugs
- Demographic factors associated with increased use
 - Low income <£10K 11.0% -vs- high income >£50K 6.7%)
 - Most deprived 9.5% -vs- least deprived 4.9%
 - Rural 6.7% -vs- Urban 7.8%
 - Low happiness 2015/16 10.8% -vs- 2016/17 16.1%
 - Long-term illness / disability

Drug	Yes	No
Prescription painkillers	13.9%	6.5%
Any illicit drug	10.6%	8.1%
Cannabis	9.3%	6.3%

UK population level: Internet surveys

- Undertaken by our group since 2012
- Definition of non-medical use
 - "used without a doctor's prescription or for any reason other than what was recommended by your doctor"
- Demographics
 - Age, gender, income, geographical location
- Non-medical use of a range of prescription medicines
 - Opioids, benzodiazepines, Z drugs, stimulants, GABAergics
 - Formulation, frequency, route
 - Perceived safety of prescription medicines
 - Association with chronic pain



Misuse of opioids in the UK

- Stability in misuse between annual surveys
- Commonest misused is codeine: OTC 44%, POM 27%
 - Other opioids lifetime misuse <5%
- Very low rates in those associated with high use in US

Drug Class	Drug	Rate
Sustained release	Oxycontin®, Longtec®, Targect®	0.3-0.5%
Immediate release	Oxynorm® IR tablets and liquid	0.3%

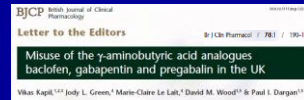
Reason for misuse	Frequency
Enjoyment / to get high	5-29%
Social reasons	2-29%
Out of curiosity	0-15%
Safer	3-21%
Prevent come-down	0-10%
Cope with stress	11-33%

Misuse of benzodiazepines and Z-drugs in the UK

V. Kapil, J. L. Green, C. Le Lait, D. M. Wood and P. I. Dargatzis

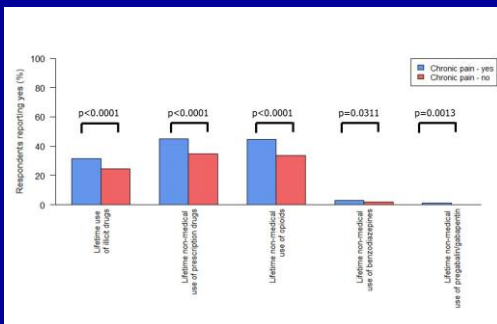
The British Journal of Psychiatry 2016; 208: 402-408. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.115.168020

- Life-time misuse: 2012: 7.7%; 2014: 2.3%; 2015: 1.8%
- Highest rates in drugs more frequently prescribed:
 - Diazepam (1.4%), Temazepam (0.6%), Zopiclone (0.5%)



- Lower life-time misuse than benzodiazepines/Z Drugs'
 - Baclofen 0.2%, Gabapentin 0.4%, Pregabalin 0.3%
- Misuse associated sourcing from medical prescribing

Prescription drug misuse and chronic pain



Loperamide misuse in the UK: 2016



- Survey more rapidly adaptable than CSEW
- Lifetime use of loperamide in 2016 (29.2%)
 - 135 (4.6%) reported lifetime non-medical use
- Those reporting non-medical use of loperamide were
 - younger (42 years -vs- 47 years, $p < 0.001$)
 - more likely to live in London (31% -vs- 13%, $p < 0.001$)
 - more likely to report lifetime illicit drug use (41% -vs- 29%, $p = 0.004$)
- 21% used loperamide for enjoyment and/or to get high

Discussion and Conclusions

- Increasing evidence of non-medical use of prescription medicines in the UK
 - Predominately opioids and benzodiazepines
 - Less commonly with GABAergics
- Misuse appears associated with certain 'sub-populations'
 - Clubbers, MSM community
 - Those with chronic illness / pain
- Significant harms being associated with misuse
 - Drug treatment, drug-related deaths, (ED presentations)
- Understanding relationship between prescribing patterns will enable improved harm reduction strategies

Thank You

