Research to Community

IDU taking methadone less likely to move into regular jobs than IDU taking non-methadone treatments

What is the study about?

- One of the goals of addiction treatment is to help people reduce their drug use and gain employment.
- Work may also help reduce involvement in risky activities such as drug dealing and sex work.
- We undertook this study to explore whether people in addiction treatment were more likely to move into regular jobs than people not in addiction treatment.

What did the study find?

- Our initial results suggested that people in addiction treatment were no more likely to move into employment than those that were not in treatment.
- However, when we looked at different types of treatment separately, people taking methadone were less likely to move into a regular job than those in other types of treatment.
- People in non-methadone types of treatment were more likely to move into regular jobs than those in methadone treatment.

The study asked:

Are people in addiction treatment more likely to move into regular jobs than people not in addiction treatment?

How was the study conducted?

- Every six months between May of 1996 and May of 2005, we asked 1599 people who use injection drugs (IDU) in the Vancouver area if they were enrolled in addiction treatment, and if so, what type of treatment.
- At the same time, we also asked them if they earned income from a regular job.
- We then explored the relationship between work and addiction treatment.

The study found:

Those taking methadone were less likely to move into a regular job than those in other types of treatment.

Implications for policy: Why is the study important?

Requirements of treatment

- It may be the requirement to take methadone daily in a supervised environment that hinders moving into employment.

Importance of reducing interference

- It is therefore important to consider ways to reduce any interference between treatment and important activities such as work.

Importance of exploring alternatives

- It is also important to explore alternatives to methadone, such as buprenorphine or extended-release naltrexone, in order to facilitate positive treatment outcomes.