



Infectious Diseases Institute

College of Health sciences, Makerere University

Investing in the Future: Impacting Real Lives



IDI



WHEN AND HOW DO INDIVIDUALS TRANSITION FROM REGULAR DRUG USE TO INJECTION DRUG USE IN UGANDA?

INTRODUCTION :

In 2019, a rapid assessment was conducted on the growing non-medical use of prescription drugs.

This assessment was conducted by the Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI), College of Health Sciences Makerere University, and the Uganda Harm Reduction Network (UHRN).

This study capitalized on a 2017 study carried out in Uganda which estimated the risk of acquiring HIV as “22 times higher” for people who inject drugs (PWID) than that those who do not.

THE PROBLEM:

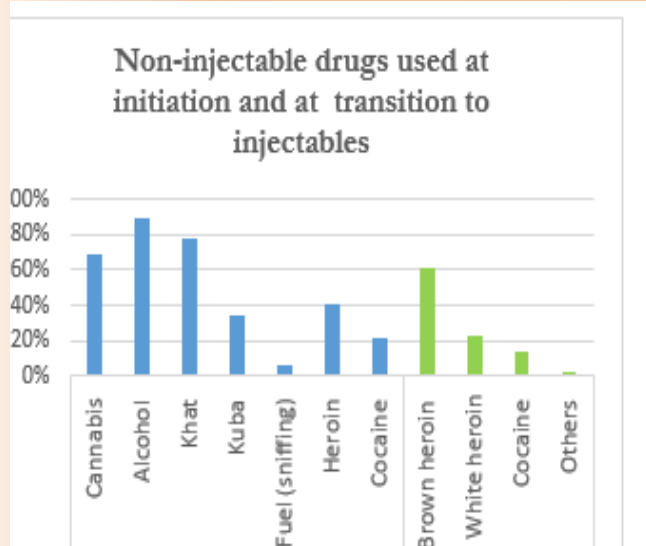
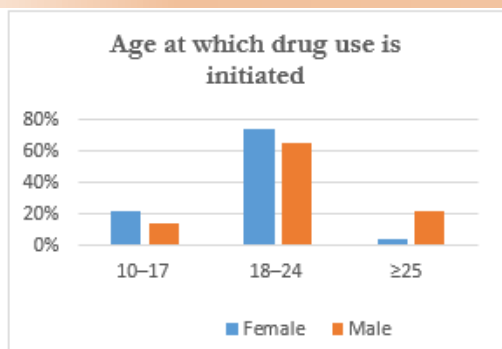
There is a worrying increase in people who use drugs especially people who inject these drugs (PWID), according to statistics.

Injecting is the riskiest method of drug use and it exposes PWID to infectious diseases including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

THE APPROACH:

A rapid assessment, which capitalized on the 2017 findings, was carried out in Kampala and Mbale. The inclusion criteria were consenting adults of 18 years and above. They had to have injected drugs at least once in the past three months and were from the respective towns. The study participants were sampled by snowballing and direct recruitment at drug hot-spots.

THE FINDINGS



- Individuals attributed the transition to the following :
 - Curiosity
 - Sense of belonging
 - Will to attain a better status
 - To get high and feel joy
 - Fit in society
 - Relate better with injecting peers
 - Client and male peer influence (for women, girls, and female who are sex workers)
 - Social network

The time lag from the first drug use and first injection was 4.5 years.

Nearly 85% of the participants shared syringes and needles on their first injections.

CONCLUSION

Over 81% of non-injecting drug users transitioned into injecting by age 24

Over 85% shared injecting equipment at their first injection.

The transitioning reproduces a population of PWID and puts them at an increased risk of HIV and HCV

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Government of Uganda should draw attention and resources to PWID by making strategies that prevent transition.
 - The Government could provide safer injection education and effective peer education.
 - Health and Education interventions targeting social networks could reduce transitioning and infectious diseases transmission among PWID
 - Drug addiction and drug tolerance needs to be addressed by drug treatment interventions including Music Assisted Therapy (MAT)
 - The Government could exploit the 4.5-year time lag to control transitioning through preventive strategies.



REFERENCE

Matayo, Buyuku & Wamala, Twaibu, (2019). When and how do individuals transition from regular drug use to injection drug use in Uganda? Findings from a rapid assessment. Harm Reduction Journal. 16.10.1186/s12954-019-0350-2