



Lanarkshire ADAT
ALCOHOL & DRUG ACTION TEAM

Report to : DAT Association Drug-related Deaths Sub-goup
Date : 29th September 2004
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Title : Social network correlates of self-reported non-fatal overdose – Article Summary

Purpose of Report

Based on a sample of over 800 cocaine and opiate users, this study by Latkin, Hua and Tobin (2004) examined the relationship between history of self-reported drug overdoses and social network characteristics. The findings of this study are of relevance to the DAT Association Drug-related Deaths subgroup's recommendations regarding the use of peer education on dealing with overdose.

Background

This study follows from previous evidence regarding the social and contextual factors associated with drug overdose. Using a social network approach, it was predicted that conflictual ties and more drug users in the network would increase risky drug-taking behaviour, whereas social support may help to regulate drug use.

Findings

The authors found that even after adjusting for frequency of drug use and demographic factors, social network factors (the number of injectors in the network and the number of individuals in the network that the individual had conflict with) were associated with recent overdose.

Conclusion

This has implications for overdose prevention. Key members of large networks of injecting drug users, identified using an instrument such as the Social Network Inventory, would be an ideal target for training in peer education regarding overdose prevention and treating overdose victims with Naloxone.

Reference:

Latkin, C. A., Hua, W., and Tobin, K. (2004). Social network correlates of self-reported non-fatal overdose. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 73, 61-67.