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Integrative Approach at the local level

Impact on drug treatment



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Integrative Approach at the local level: Impact on drug treatment

The integrative aspect in drug strategies is of essential importance, especially on the local -city level. Every local social organism has its own need for special strategies, in which - ideally -all proponents of NGO s as Governmental organisations dealing with the problem should be involved. As the development in treatment goes more and more into the direction of flexible integrative approaches for special populations (adolescents, retired persons, gender aspect, dual diagnosis, etc.) the same development has started on an overall level in finding the best strategy for the individual through providing networking and contact between even the most different proponents in the field.

There are some positive examples in this direction as the strategies in Rotterdam ,Matosinhos , San Sebastian or Vienna can show. In terms of treatment centres for drug addiction it is essential that they have to become partner of the local platform and above all have to take part in the evaluation of the drug users' needs. In this direction they also have to be partner in planning the best intervention for the drug user taking into account the most different possibilities of secondary as tertiary prevention based on guidelines , contact and information exchange.

On the basis of exchange of experience through meetings and workshop representatives from the Cities of Berlin, Magdeburg, Larnaca, Mestre, Pistoia, Palma and Piacenza hae set up the following guidelines which cover part of the wide range of the topic and in future work have to be completed and evaluated:

General objectives

- On the local city level special strategies should be developed
- All different stakeholders working in the field of prevention, demand reduction and supply reduction should be involved in the development of a local drug strategy
- Special focus should be directed towards gender specific approaches as well as on a special support system for ethnic minorities
- The most vulnerable groups should be identified and a targeted prevention and support system provided
- The initiative for an integrated approach involving all stakeholders has to come from the responsible administrative and political bodies

- The participation of NGO`s should be supported
- The aim of an integrative , local approach is to optimize the effective use of the resources , exchange information, promote a dialogue and provide information as well as data as an objective basis for political decision making
- A detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the actual strategy has to be realised , with particular regard to:
 - prevention of drug use and addiction problems , a reduction in the supply of and the demand for illicit drugs, the limitation of social damage ,a decrease in damage to health, reduction in drug-related crime

Aims in detail

- Reduce the harmful use of drugs
 - Reduce access to drugs
- Reduce the supply and use of drugs in the local community
- Reduce the public nuisance for the community through drug related crime, violence and antisocial behaviour
- Reduce drug-related harm for individuals, families and the local community in general
- Reduce risk behaviours in the leisure time, clubs and night life associated with drug use
- Reduce the negative social impact and decrease in life quality connected to the harmful use of drugs
- Reduce the loss of productivity through harmful drug use and the connected economic losses
- Increase the understanding of the local community of drug-related harm and the psychosocial connection to the local environment through an open dialogue involving civil society as well as the relevant media and business companies
- Increase access to high-quality prevention activities which are approved to be effective and treatment services

- Increase local monitoring systems as well as evidence based practice relying on the information of evaluation and research
- Increase the cooperation of existing partnerships and promote new partnerships and networking
- Increase communication mechanisms and promote cooperative development ,transfer of data and use of research among interested parties
- Increase the education and involvement of primary care such as general practitioners hospital units in early intervention, relapse prevention and shared efforts for rehabilitation
- Increase access to treatment
- Increase partnerships between drug treatment services and mental health services to enhance responses to mental co morbidity and avoid "revolving door "phenomenon for these clients
- Increase the access to treatment programs instead of serving criminal sentences in prison as well as treatment possibilities and implantation of harm reduction measures in prison
- Increase early intervention with key risk groups, including violent adolescents, adolescents with school problems and ADHS, young offenders, children of substance misusing parents and looked after children; and provide treatment for adolescents in need before they develop drug problems or drug problems escalate.
- Increase scanning of local, environmental structures to ensure that pro-active and responsive attention is given to emerging trends
- Increase the community's understanding of the antecedents of drug misuse and effective interventions to reduce harm by providing effective information through representatives of the health and social support system as well as through peer education, training of training of club owners, eg
- Create a specific budget line in order to facilitate an ongoing process of consultation including representatives of civil society and independent professional experts about the impact of drug policies at the level of citizens

Practical impact

- Local partnerships bring together representatives of local agencies involved in delivery of the Drug Strategy, such as health services, social services, police, justice system probation services, local education authorities, youth services, social housing providers and voluntary sector service providers, NGO ´s and other representatives of civil society
- It is in the interest of the drug user that the different institutions he has contact with are connected and communicate to offer the best solution adapted to the realistic situation .In any case the rights of personal anonymity of the user , the medical and psychotherapeutic codex have to be fully respected
- It is in the interest of the health care providers as well as the representatives of law enforcement to cooperate and exchange information being empowered to offer better counselling and support based on an increase of knowledge about existing possibilities
- Enhanced cooperation will significantly reduce the number of failed interventions as more than one strategy can be offered to the individual and increase flexibility as well as continuity
- In fact the person in need has through integrated measures a higher possibility to receive the adequate intervention with less waiting time
- NGO ´s have to be especially motivated to take part in an integrative exchange and process. As there is often an overburdening with work exchange is often experienced as extra work without useful outcome. Therefore institutions have to be supported, also financially to take part in an integrative process and need regular feed back about the practical impact of the discussion process from the side of the political decision takers.
- An advisory group for the political decision makers including all stakeholders has to be set up, all members of the advisory group should have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda of the regular meetings

Impact on Treatment

- Treatment facilities have to be connected and interact to the benefit of their clients
- Regular contact not only in between treatment facilities but also with facilities providing harm reduction strategies general practitioners and therapists providing outpatient treatment are essential to better understand the motivational needs of the clients
- Drug users have become a very heterogeneous population regarding age, social status, health status and consumption patterns. Treatment facilities have to consider this fact and develop flexible programs which fit the client s personal needs. Input from the prevention side , harm reduction side but also from the side of users organisations should be involved in the process to optimize strategies to the user’s needs.
- As therapeutic measures instead of prison sentences have proved highly successful regular communication between treatment providers and representatives of the justice system , especially the judges from the drug courts are essential to optimize strategies and in general work into the same direction
- Treatment of drug addiction is a long process needing several interventions at different levels regarding the changing psycho-social and motivational situation of the user. Therefore continuity of care is essential and implicates regular contact between providers and a functional referral system overcoming concurrency and fear of financial losses. Especially abstinence based facilities and substitution providers have to intensively cooperate if both directions do not exist in the same facility.
- The reintegration in the job market as well as appropriate housing is essential to stabilize the positive effects of successful therapies. Therefore services from the job market as well as institutions providing assistance in housing have to be integrated in the treatment program. Together education strategies should be developed to increase the chances of the clients in the job market.
- The positive outcome of treatment has to be communicated to the local authorities as well as to the community. Treatment facilities have to network to strengthen these promotion efforts.