

Phoenix Project – A HARM REDUCTION OUTREACH PROJECT ON AIDS PREVENTION: a joint effort between the Red Ribbon Centre of the Department of Health (RRC) and the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA).

I. Background:

- In Hong Kong, the number of HIV infected intravenous drug-users (IDUs) from voluntary reporting, seroprevalence studies and unlinked anonymous screening has been low until 1998. There had since been an increasing trend of HIV infection in drug users as reflected in the results of the surveillance system.
- If organisations and providers are to succeed in effectively reducing the transmission of HIV, a comprehensive approach should be adopted. One of the major strategies is the community outreach which has been proven to be successful in many parts of the world, but not adequately implemented locally.

II. Community outreach - why is it important?

- It reaches IDUs outside the conventional service systems;
- Outreach interventions help create a culture of risk reduction in the community; which helps reinforce prevention messages;
- Peers, who are often useful agents in community outreach, are likely to be trusted by IDUs and the peers may succeed in conveying the messages;
- It provides services in settings that are familiar to IDUs.

III. Objectives:

- To raise awareness of HIV/AIDS among drug users;
- To discourage IDUs from sharing needles/syringes;
- To encourage IDUs to have HIV antibody test;
- To provide referral services

IV. Collaborators

- This harm reduction outreach project is a concerted effort between the Special Preventive Programme (SPP) of the Department of Health and the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA). The Drug & Narcotics Division of the Department of Health and the Auxiliary Medical Service are also partners of the project.

V. Outreach Programme Components:

- The outreach programme consists of the following components:
 - (1) Peer counsellor recruitment
 - (2) Training for peer counsellors
 - (3) Field Work

(1) Peer counsellor recruitment

- SARDA is responsible for the recruitment of peer counsellors who are either ex-drug users or non-drug users.
 - **First recruitment (November 2000)** -10 peer counsellors were recruited
 - **Second recruitment (November 2001)** -8 peer counsellors were recruited

(2) Training for peer counsellors

- Training provided for each new recruitment:
- Training included two workshops held on 2 separate days;
- Each last for 3 hours;
- Workshops were delivered by medical staff from SPP and medical social worker from SARDA

(3) Field work

- Each visit would last for 3 hours in the evening with 5 visits per week.
- SARDA is responsible for preparing the time table for each month.
- Each peer counsellor has to complete the log book during each visit.
- They have to sign the attendance book kept at the respective methadone clinic and hand in their log book to the medical social worker (MSW) on duty.
- They should report to the MSW on duty of that particular methadone clinic immediately when they encounter any difficulty during their outreach work.

VI. Evaluation

- To conduct process evaluation by good documentation of the whole project
- To collect feedback from the peer counsellors on the project through qualitative interview
- To analyse the log book on what has been achieved in a number of area such as number of field visits made, number of drug users approached, number of methadone clinics covered and the extent of coverage of the salient messages

Phoenix Project – Log Sheet Record (鳳凰計劃 – 記錄簿)

Methadone Clinic (美沙酮中心): 21 No.

Date of outreach (探訪日期): Nov 2000 to Oct 2001

(I) No of successful interviews (成功被訪者人數):

Total (共): 7652 no

Male(男) : 6572 no

Female(女) : 995 no

(II) Approximate age (看似的人歲數):

Youth (30 year old or above) 青少年 (30 歲或以下) : 1003 no (人)

Adult (31-59 year old) 成年人 (31-59) : 5712 no (人)

Elderly (60 year old or above) 老年人 (60 歲或以上) : 829 no (人)

Methadone Clinic (美沙酮中心): 20 No.

Date of outreach (探訪日期): Nov 2001 to June 2002

(I) No of successful interviews(成功被訪者人數):

Total (共): 4544 no

Male(男) : 3972 no

Female(女) : 572 no

(II) Approximate age (看似的人歲數):

Youth (30 year old or above) 青少年 (30 歲或以下) : 524 no (人)

Adult (31-59 year old) 成年人 (31-59): 3722 no (人)

Elderly (60 year old or above) 老年人 (60 歲或以上) : 298 no (人)

VII. Outcome and Conclusion

A survey of 460 methadone patients gathering from 15 methadone clinics and 60 street addicts gathering in two public parks done concluded that*:

- The Project had induced cognitive and behavioral changes among the service recipients. These changes included enhanced awareness on AIDS, increased knowledge in HIV transmission and AIDS prevention methods, and safer drug taking and sexual behaviors.
- The Project also increases the ex-addict volunteers' alertness on AIDS. It also induces positive changes among the volunteers and the volunteers also further spread the AIDS prevention message among their peers.
- Overall speaking, this outreach approach is an effective means of AIDS prevention among drug abusers. The study also indicates that there are many advantages of enlisting ex-addicts to work as outreaching volunteers in such program.

* A REVIEW ON THE HARM REDUCTION OUTREACH PROJECT ON AIDS PREVENTION by Mr. LEE King-fai of SARDA