

Facts and Figures

Methadone Substitution

Worldwide there are estimated 16 million injecting drug users (IDUs). Up to 3 million are infected with HIV. Up to 10 % of global HIV infections are due to injecting drug use.

In Asia there are more than 8 million IDUs, a quarter living in South Asia and Southeast Asia. In many Asian countries, injecting drug use is the main route of HIV transmission. Less than 10 % of IDUs in Asia have access to HIV prevention programmes.

Malaysia has one of the highest rates of illegal drug use in Southeast Asia. Of around 200,000 IDUs, approximately 11 % are infected with HIV. Currently around 15,000 patients are in opioid substitution treatment. Two-thirds of the approximately 80,000 people living with HIV in Malaysia contracted the disease through the use of contaminated needles.

In India, of nearly 165,000 IDUs around 10 % are infected with HIV. Methadone was not approved as a medication for substitution treatment in India until 2009. The first methadone substitution programme is planned to start in 2011.

In Nepal the number of drug dependent people is estimated to be 70,000. Some 28,000 inject heroin and pharmaceuticals intravenously. One in three IDUs is infected with HIV and up to 90 % are infected with hepatitis C. Around 45 % of the population in Nepal is infected with tuberculosis. 350 IDUs are currently in methadone substitution treatment. The cost of medication averages EUR 0.17 per patient per day.

In Central Asia there are currently around 300,000 injecting drug users. Up to 70 % of all HIV infections are due to injecting drug use. Less than 1% of injecting drug users have access to substitution programmes.

In Germany there are approximately 150,000 IDUs, largely between 35 and 45 years of age. The rate of HIV infection in this group is around 5 %. Some 76,000 IDUs are in substitution treatment, around 80 % with methadone. The cost of medication per patient per day is about EUR 3.* Through the use of dispensing systems the costs are reduced by around 50 %.

What do we know?

Methadone is a synthetic substitute for opioids like heroin. Opioid substitution treatment with methadone helps people who use opioids to stop illegal drug use and rebuild their lives. It is also a major tool in reducing the transmission of HIV.

What are we doing?

The aim of the strategic alliance of the medical devices manufacturer CompWare Medical with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH** is to support the implementation and scaling-up of high-quality and low-cost methadone substitution treatment for people who inject opioids in the partner countries Nepal, India and Malaysia. Beginning 2011 the strategic alliance was expanded to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan.

How do we do it?

Provision of a documentation and dispensing system (MeDoSys)

Software and automatic dispensers from CompWare Medical ensure precise, tamper-proof documentation of the treatment and enable the safe dispensing of liquid methadone to patients.

Staff training

Medical staff, social workers and peer educators receive on-the-job and needs-based training on the use of the MeDoSys system, combined opioid dependence and HIV treatment and psychosocial support.

Advisory services to governmental and non-governmental organisations

...on international financing mechanisms for harm reduction and substitution programmes, on reducing the cost of methadone, and on developing national standards on the basis of international guidelines.

With technical support from CompWare Medical and targeted capacity development from GIZ, national AIDS and drug control programmes in partner countries are assisted in high quality, cost-effective and sustainable scaling up of opioid substitution treatment programmes, a main approach to HIV prevention in countries with concentrated epidemics.

What we accomplish...

...with partner organisations

- MeDoSys is installed in state and private outpatient clinics and penal institutions.
- Medical and other professional staff are trained in comprehensive methadone substitution treatment.
- Simpler and more precise dispensing of methadone and documentation of the treatment.
- The system is reliable and user-friendly even under difficult conditions.
- Increase in the security of substitution programmes and reduction in the risk of diversion of methadone.
- Reduction in medication costs by building capacity for mixing the methadone solution on site.

...on the political level

Prominent positioning on international agendas of the topic opioid substitution treatment as part of a comprehensive harm reduction strategy, e.g. by presenting the project at several conferences and professional conventions.

NEPAL

MeDoSys systems have been installed in three outpatient clinics with 100-200 methadone patients each. Four additional sites are planned.

MALAYSIA

Installation of four MeDoSys systems in outpatient clinics and one MeDoSys system in a prison for the treatment of 1,000-1,500 patients.

INDIA

Installation of a MeDoSys system in the first outpatient clinics is planned for 2011.

KYRGYZSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, KAZAKHSTAN

Two systems have been installed in Tajikistan in cooperation with UNDP.
 Two Systems each are planned for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

...for the company

Expansion of international business from Austria, Bosnia and Spain to new markets in Asia.

...for the target group

- Patients have access to high-quality and comprehensive substitution treatment.
- Reduction of high-risk behaviour and premature patient-initiated termination of treatment.
- The transmission of concomitant diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis is reduced and access to treatment of these diseases is improved.
- Patients can recover and rebuild their lives.

...toward sustainability and broad impact

- Introduction of high-quality documentation and dispensing systems for methadone substitution treatment programmes in six Asian countries.
- Transfer of extensive German experience in the field of substitution treatment to Asian countries.
- Development of national curricula and training manuals for the qualification of medical staff and social workers.
- Support in developing national guidelines and standards for methadone substitution treatment.
- Sustainable commitment of the company based on long-term business interest.
- Establishment of a Nepalese-German clinic partnership.
- Additional bilateral project to support the scaling up of the methadone maintenance programme in Nepal.
- Planned: additional regional technical cooperation projects in the field of harm reduction.

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