Many People With HIV Who Inject Drugs Could Benefit From Risk Reduction Efforts

A CDC survey found concerning rates of high-risk sex and injection practices and a lower rate of successful treatment of HIV.

August 12, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey found that there is room for improvement in changing behaviors among HIV-positive people who inject drugs (PWID) that pose a high risk of transmission of the virus to others.

Publishing their findings in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC researchers analyzed data from the Medical Monitoring Project, which is a nationally representative cross-sectional survey of people diagnosed with HIV. They looked in particular at the 3% of respondents who reported injecting drugs during the preceding 12 months and compared their behaviors with those who did not report such drug use.

Among those reporting injection drug use, 11% gave their used syringes to others, and 10% gave other used injection equipment to others. Sixty-one percent reported injecting drugs before sex.

The survey respondents most commonly reported getting their syringes from a pharmacy or drug store (63% reported this); a friend, relative or sex partner (50%); a syringe services program, or SSP (32%); or a needle or drug dealer, shooting gallery or the street (21%).

The most common ways that respondents reported disposing of syringes included putting them in the trash, on the street or in a nonmedical waste container (53%); putting them in a medical waste container (50%); giving them to an SSP (30%); or keeping them to reuse (29%).

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported needing alcohol or drug use treatment, but during the previous year, just 20% obtained such treatment, including 8% who enrolled in a medication-assisted treatment program for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

Forty-eight percent of those who reported injection drug use had a detectable viral load, compared with 35% of the HIV-positive survey respondents who did not report recent injection drug use. A respective 63% and 31% of each group reported engaging in sex without a condom; 17% and 2%

reported having sex in exchange for money or goods; and 18% and 6% reported engaging in sex that posed a high risk of transmitting HIV, which was defined as having one or more detectable viral load test results during the preceding 12 months and engaging in condomless sex with a partner who was HIV negative or had an unknown serostatus and who was not on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

“Increasing access to sterile injection equipment, drug treatment services, and education around harm reduction and condom use might reduce HIV transmission among sexual and injection partners of HIV-positive PWID,” the study authors concluded.

To read the CDC report, click here.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/many-people-hiv-inject-drugs-benefit-risk-reduction-efforts