Abstract

Introduction. Metadone maintenance programmes are about harm reduction, as understood by a series of measures destined to improve the health and quality of life of those who do not want or who cannot give up their addiction. The aim of this paper is to describe the profile of heroin addict when they first sought treatment in a Mobile Drug dependency Unit (MDU), and their acceptance of the unit. Material and methods. Questionnaire-based, descriptive, transversal study of 135 subjects selected in a stratified random way from subjects seeking treatment for the first time in an MDU in Murcia (SE Spain). Details of socio-demographic characteristics, family, personal, consumption, and attendance at therapeutic programmes, clinics and the mobile unit itself were included. Results. The users were mostly young men with a mean age of 26.2 ± 4.6 years. The average school leaving age was 14.4 ± 2.3 years, and 74.1% had been detained previously by the police. The proportion of daily consumption among users for heroin, cocaine, benzodiazepines, cannabis, alcohol and tobacco was 100%, 64%, 18%, 19%, 58%, and 98%, respectively. 37.8% subjects had not received treatment previously. More than a third of users had no knowledge of their serological state. In 90% of cases, the person suggesting that the interviewed subject attended the MDU had himself used the service and continued doing so. Conclusion. The profile of the population seeking advice is defined by their low socio-cultural status, social alienation and early use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. The MDU was able to establish contact with a group from the drug-dependent population which had not been motivated to seek treatment before and which would normally shy away from other social services. The influence of partners on beginning treatment was high.

Keywords

Methadone, substance abuse, mobile unit.