

Testing of Infectious Diseases as a Part of Preventive and Harm Reduction Measures Targeted at Infectious Diseases among Injecting Drug Users in the Czech Republic



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BACKGROUND: The testing and early detection of infectious diseases among injecting drug users is a part of preventive and harm reduction measures reducing the incidence and prevalence of infectious diseases in the population of drug users, as well as the general population. **AIM:** To review the available data on the proportion of tested injecting drug users and on the availability of testing for HIV, HCV, HBV, and syphilis among injecting drug users in the Czech Republic in approximately the last 10 years. **METHODS:** Analysis of information about the testing rate, the number of programmes for drug users providing testing, and the number of tests performed for selected infections obtained from the available sources. **RESULTS:** The results that are presented indicate a significant decrease in the rate of injecting drug users tested in the last decade.

This decrease is partly related to the low availability of rapid and saliva tests (esp. for HCV and HIV, respectively). A clear downward trend in the availability of this rapid testing has been observed, especially in low-threshold facilities. Although this decline stopped in 2008, the levels remained very low in historical terms. **CONCLUSIONS:** The downward trend in the tests performed on IDUs can certainly be referred to as a negative phenomenon which may result in a higher risk of the transmission of infectious diseases among IDUs, as well as among the general population. In the Czech Republic, an increase in the rate of tests on IDUs is essential from the public health perspective. There is also a need for the improvement of systematic cooperation between drug services and health facilities as far as the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases is concerned.

KEY WORDS: INJECTING DRUG USE – INFECTIOUS DISEASES – TESTING – HARM REDUCTION

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