Use of tramadol for opioid withdrawal in Mamelodi during the COVID-19 lockdown

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21/10/2020
Community Oriented Substance Use Programme

Initiative between City of Tshwane and University of Pretoria, Dept of Family Medicine: implemented 2016

17 (16 currently active) sites all over Tshwane, 3 sites in Mamelodi

National Lockdown 26th March 2020

Homeless shelters
Lockdown Challenges

- Access to substances
- Access to hustle
- Forced withdrawal resulting in reduced tolerance
- Risk of overdose
- Homeless population placed in shelters
- How to manage large numbers of people approaching us asking for help??
- High cost of OST
- End March 2020: 552 Methadone
  60 Suboxone
COVID Response

- Hand sanitizing, face-masks, screening of all persons entering premises, physical distancing measures
- Harm Reduction principles stressed with addition of COVID specific prevention strategies

Increased risk of overdose:
- Increased emotional stress
- Quality/strength of heroin changes
- Using in isolation
- Reduced tolerance due to access
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Facility name</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Number placed</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lucas van der Berg Stadium</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless (some PWUD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lyttelton Town Hall</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>M + F</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Homeless (some PWUD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oosterlig</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Older adults</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>NG Arcadia Church</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Older adults</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Melodi Ya Tshwane</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Adult mothers and their children</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Facility name</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Number placed</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Capital Park</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless (some PWUD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Life Changing Ministries</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless + PWUD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>St Wilfreds</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless (few PWUD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mabopane Indoor Sport Centre</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless + PWUD</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lyttelton Sports Park</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Adults and youth</td>
<td>Homeless + PWUD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Total numbers- more than 550 substance (opioid) users
Tramadol

- Chief Pharmacist Mr Butelezi approached Pharmaceutical Services at Tshwane Health District
- Requested methadone from the district
- Methadone 331 bottles x 60ml = 662 users 15ml x 2/7
- EML clinical guidelines Tramadol 200mg BD- second line can be used
- Available as short-acting 50mg capsules
- Decision made- withdrawal management using Tramadol
Tramadol consent- use for withdrawal and not as maintenance

Tramadol SOP- initiated on 200mg BD (400mg/day) but increased to 600mg/day as needed.¹

Medication acquired from Regional Pharmacy by chief pharmacist

Clinicians working at the shelters and COSUP sites able to manage withdrawal using tramadol

Monitoring process
## Tramadol in shelters- April (Level 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No 2 Struben</th>
<th>Irene Station</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 initiated</td>
<td>20 initiated</td>
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</table>

**Immediate dissatisfaction**

**Initially good response**

**Effects noted:**
- worsening withdrawal symptoms
- sweating
- arthralgia
- abdominal discomfort
- worsening hypersalivation
- insomnia

**Effects noted:**
- Some relief provided by tramadol (Abdominal discomfort and generalized body pains)
- Insomnia a problem
- Effects only lasted a few hours
- Reduced use of illicit substance

**Outcome:** all stopped tramadol after first few doses and asked for methadone

**Outcome:** Gradual decline in those taking tramadol. Many began asking for methadone.
Tramadol available and some effect shown
Cost-effective
Client profile different to those in shelters
Numbers in Mamelodi ↑
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>MAMELODI</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>AVG DOSE mg/day (Mamelodi)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2020</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>MRH- 400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikageng- 400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lusaka- 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2020 (new)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td>MRH- 425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikageng- 400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lusaka- 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2020 (new)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>MRH- 449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikageng- 403</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lusaka- 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2020 (new)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>MRH- 467</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikageng- 409</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lusaka- 399</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2020 (new) stopped new initiations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>MRH- 471</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ikageng- 406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lusaka- 325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary data

1. 9 clients - all male
2. Usual method of heroin use - 7 injectors, 3 smokers (1 dual)
3. HIV positive on Treatment - 2
4. Initiation dose - 200mg BD (avg)
5. Final dose - 243.75 mg BD (avg)
6. Side effects
7. Relief from withdrawal
8. Withdrawal symptoms experienced
9. Describe heroin/nyaope usage on tramadol
Side Effects

- Dizziness: 4
- Insomnia: 4
- Headache: 1
- Nausea: 2
- Vomiting: 0
- Sweating: 2
- Dry Mouth: 1
Relief from withdrawal

- Some relief, 7
- Good relief, 1
- No relief, 1
Withdrawal symptoms

- Sweating
- General body pain
- Rhinorrhea
- Lacrimation
- Abdominal cramps
- Yawning
- Gooseflesh
- Restlessness/Anxiety
- No Cravings
- Some cravings
- Severe cravings

Legend:
- Green: Sweating
- Red: Abdominal cramps
- Yellow: Yawning
- Light green: Gooseflesh
- Dark green: General body pain
- Orange: Rhinorrhea
- Pink: Restlessness/Anxiety
- Brown: No Cravings
- Light pink: Some cravings
- Dark pink: Severe cravings
Current use of nyaope/heroin

- Less than before, 6
- More than before, 1
- Same as before, 1
- Unsure, 1

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- Less than before, 6
- More than before, 1
- Same as before, 1
- Unsure, 1
Significance

- South African data
- Tramadol information limited
- Advocate for better management options for opioid dependance
Thank you!
References
