Problem alcohol use among problem drug users: development of clinical guidelines for general practice

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Abstract:

Introduction: Problem alcohol use is common and associated with considerable adverse health and social outcomes among patients who attend GPs in Ireland and other European countries for opioid substitution treatment. This paper aims to describe the development and content of clinical guidelines for the management of problem alcohol use among current or former opioid users attending general practice for methadone treatment.

Methods: The guidelines were developed in several stages: i) identification of key stakeholders; ii) development of evidence-based draft guidelines, and iii) determination of a modified ‘Delphi-facilitated’ consensus among the group members. These guidelines were informed by a review of scientific evidence and a qualitative study, results of which will be presented also at this conference.

Results: The guidelines incorporate advice for GPs on all aspects of care of this problem, including i) definition of problem alcohol use among problem drug users, ii) screening / identification of problem alcohol use, iii) interventions for treatment and management of problem alcohol use, iv) referral to secondary services and v) role of GPs in the management of persistent problem alcohol use and on-going care.

Conclusions: General practice has an important role to play in the care of problem alcohol use among problem drug users, especially patients who attend for methadone treatment. Further research on strategies to inform the implementation of this study is a priority.
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