

Abstract

A mixed-methods evaluation of an Irish remote model of opioid substitution treatment

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Abstract

Introduction: Providing health care to rural communities is a challenge, particular for marginalised groups like people who use drugs. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic further increases these challenges. The use of remote models of care, including telemedicine, help to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and provide new opportunities to engage existing and new patients in treatment. It is recognised that people who used opioids have increased health needs and struggle to engage in health care compared to the general population. Opioid substitution treatment (OST) is effective at reducing these health inequalities but coverage is often inadequate. To increase access to OST during the pandemic, a national remote model of OST was developed in Ireland. An evaluation is being conducted 18 months after commencement to evaluate its effectiveness at engaging people in

OST, its impact on their drug use, general health and quality of life. The evaluation also aims to describe the experiences of both services providers and users and report aspects that can be modified and improved.

Methods: A mixed-methods evaluation is being conducted. It consists of a chart review that collects demographic data (age, sex, family details and education and employment status). It also includes the collection and analysis of data on engagement in treatment, changes in drug use and general health. A series of one-to-one interviews are being conducted (service providers ($n=12$) and service users ($n=10$)). Thematic analysis of the interview narratives will be conducted using NVivo 11.

Results and Discussion: The results will be ready in 2022.

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