



OSAM-O-GRAM



DATE: June 2006
DATELINE: Dayton, Ohio

Wright State University & the University of Akron

Targeted Response Initiative on Young Heroin Users in Ohio Part IV. Injection-related risks

Almost 85% of the participants in this initiative reported injection drug use. First time injection of any drug occurred at about age 21. More than 75% indicated that heroin was the first drug they ever injected. About 94% reported heroin as the most frequently injected drug.

More than half of the participants reported sharing syringes without first cleaning them. Almost 70% reported sharing other injection paraphernalia. There was some regional variation in injection-related risks observed across the state. Users in Cincinnati reported limited access to purchasing new syringes and were more likely to share drug-injection paraphernalia.

The majority were knowledgeable about injection-related risks. However, they noted several factors that contributed to unsafe injection practices: being “dope sick,” having poor access to new needles, injecting in the context of close and intimate social relationships, and the “chaotic” nature of drug use settings. For example, participants commented:

Interviewer: *With whom did you share needles?*
Participant: *My boyfriend, a couple girlfriends... It was the only needle, I didn't care. (24-year-old white woman)*

You know, you're so messed up on it [heroin], you think that's yours [syringe] laying in front of you [but it is really someone else's]. (21-year-old white woman)

Nearly all of the participants who had a history of injection drug use reported being previously tested for HIV and hepatitis C. Four individuals (6.9%) reported that they were HIV positive, and 15 (25.9%) reported that they were infected with hepatitis C.

OSAM findings indicate that the majority of “new generation” heroin users transition to injection and engage in unsafe injection practices which carries a high risk of infection with HIV and hepatitis C.

Table 5. Injection experiences	No. (%)
Ever injected drugs?	
Yes	49 (84.5%)
No	9 (15.5%)
Age at first injection, mean (SD)	21.2 (3.9)
First drug injected	
Heroin	38 (75.6%)
OxyContin®	4 (8.9%)
Powdered cocaine	3 (6.7%)
Other	4 (8.9%)
Drug injected most frequently	
Heroin	44 (93.6%)
OxyContin®	1 (2.1%)
Powdered cocaine	2 (4.3%)
Shared used syringe without first cleaning it?	
Never	22 (46.8%)
Sometimes	22 (46.8%)
Almost always	3 (6.4%)
Shared cookers, cottons, rinse water?	
Never	15 (32.6%)
Sometimes	17 (37.0%)
Almost always	14 (30.4%)

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the June 2006 OSAM Network meeting.

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