

In Vietnam

PREVENTING HIV TRANSMISSION AMONG INJECTION DRUG USERS

Drug injection is the most common mode of HIV transmission in Vietnam. HIV is transmitted through sharing of needles among injecting drug users (IDUs) as well as through the high-risk sexual behaviors of infected IDUs, which causes wider transmission. HIV prevalence among IDUs is as high as 70 percent according to some studies.

Opioid use in Vietnam is increasing nationwide. The government had implemented many HIV prevention programs for this high-risk group but had not yet conducted methadone treatment because of the stigma and discrimination, within both the government and communities, toward HIV-infected people in general and IDUs in particular, and also toward methadone treatment. For the most part, IDUs were not offered treatment for drug use and were often simply incarcerated.

The success of this pilot program has lessened the stigma toward methadone treatment

A successful pilot program

The government of Vietnam implemented a one-year pilot program to provide MMT to 1,500 active IDUs at three clinics in Hai Phong and three clinics in Ho Chi Min City. In Vietnam, SCMS was already managing the supply and distribution of medication for people living with HIV and



Measuring methadone dosage.

AIDS. For the MMT pilot, SCMS managed the supply and distribution of methadone.

After one year, evaluation of the MMT showed that the program was successful in reducing illegal drug use, reducing crime and helping IDUs integrate better into family and society. As a result, the government decided to expand MMT into Hanoi and four other provinces and cities in 2010 and 2011 to meet the needs of a wider population of IDUs. Of the original 1,500 patients served in the pilot program, 1,270 remain enrolled. By the end of 2011, the government hopes to reach 10,000 IDUs.

Looking to the future

There is concern that the current model for methadone distribution and management will have difficulty if scaled nationally because only one appointed distributor is in charge of methadone distribution. MMT is also not considered part of the government's health services, causing difficulty



A patient signs for methadone dose.

and confusion. SCMS will continue to support the government in methadone management and dispensing, share best practices of other successful narcotics distribution systems that have scaled up rapidly, and incrementally transfer duties to government staff.

SCMS will also continue its work with the Drug Administration of Vietnam and stakeholders advocating to fully incorporate methadone treatment into government health services.

The government expects to produce methadone in the country by June 2011 to meet the increasing demand of the expanding MMT program but faces obstacles related to its own regulations as well as manufacturing.

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ABOUT SCMS

The Supply Chain Management System (SCMS) was established to collaborate within country and global partners to ensure a reliable, cost-effective and secure supply of high quality medicines and health products for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. SCMS is funded as part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Visit us at www.scms.pfscm.org.

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