

NSP NEWS



August 2007



A newsletter for Needle & Syringe Programs in WA

Welcome

To the first edition of NSP News

This will be a biannual publication developed by the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Program (SHBBVP) of the Department of Health which will aim to keep you informed of interesting projects and new developments relating to Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) in WA.

We would like to introduce those from the SHBBVP who are involved in coordinating the state-wide NSP and other hepatitis C-related projects.

Lisa Bastian - Program Manager.

Jude Bevan - Senior Policy and Planning Officer.

Vanessa Hunt - Senior Project Officer.

Georgiana Lilley - Hepatitis C Project Officer.

You are welcome to contact the SHBBVP with any queries on 9388 4841.

Good work pays off

In Australia, NSPs have been in operation for 20 years. In 1987, amendments to the Poisons Act allowed the operation of NSPs as a means of reducing the transmission of blood-borne viruses among injecting drug users, and thereby ensuring a reduction in transmission among the wider community.

From its inception in Australia in 1987 until 2000, it is estimated that NSPs are responsible for the following...

- 25,000 HIV/AIDS transmissions: **PREVENTED**
- 21,000 hepatitis C transmissions: **PREVENTED**

Between 1991 and 2000, **\$150 million was invested** in NSPs across Australia. This investment has **avoided \$7,808 million** in total treatment costs over the life of HIV and hepatitis C patients.

Source: Return on Investment in Needle and Syringe Programs in Australia, DHA 2002

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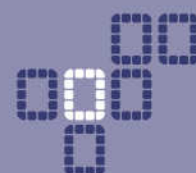
Photo L-R: Lisa Bastian, Vanessa Hunt, Jude Bevan and Georgiana Lilley



Contact Details:

For enquiries regarding any of the material in this newsletter, please contact:

nsp@health.wa.gov.au



Delivering a Healthy WA

New Product: FITSTICK™

Since 1 May 2007, the FITSTICK™ has replaced the Fitpack®

This new product enables each **uncapped** needle and syringe (fit) to be individually discarded by clicking it into its impenetrable and unbreakable black case.

Other Fitstick™ features include:

- Each fit may only be used once as the container renders the needle unusable
- Greater discretion as a Fitstick™ is less bulky than the previous Fitpack®
- Single sharps disposal
- Needle and syringes can be easily discarded in domestic waste

Feedback

We would like to hear your opinions on the new Fitstick™ and any concerns or queries raised by clients or staff. Please forward feedback to nsp@health.wa.gov.au.



Once the syringe has been used **DO NOT CAP IT** but push it firmly into the single disposal container past the locking mechanism or until you hear a 'CLICK'.

The FITSTICK™ can be safely disposed of in the domestic waste.

Needle and Syringe Vending Machines

Within the next 6 months, four NSVMs are to be placed in metro and regional areas

Needle and syringe vending machines (NSVMs) are considered a complementary service to other methods of needle and syringe provision.

NSVMs can provide after-hours access to sterile needle and syringes (NS) as well as retaining customer anonymity and improving availability and access in areas, which for a variety of reasons, are unable to provide staffed outlets.

During 2000, WA's first NSVM was established at the Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital (see photo on right) and has since dispensed over 122,000 NS.

The success of this machine prompted the SHBBVP to begin working in collaboration with the Hepatitis Council of WA to roll out an additional four machines in selected metropolitan and regional areas across WA in an effort to increase access to NS after-hours. These NSVMs are anticipated to be installed and operating within the next 6 months.



For further information please contact

Vanessa Hunt

Senior Project Officer

Sexual Health & Blood Borne Virus Program

Email: nsp@health.wa.gov.au

Hepatitis Council's Pharmacy Project

Magdalena Sotiroski has been working on training pharmacy staff to better service their injecting drug user (IDU) clients. She explains what she has been up to of late....

I am the Pharmacy Needle and Syringe Workforce Development Officer for the Hepatitis Council of WA. My role is to provide WA pharmacy staff with information, training and support relating to needle and syringe programs and harm reduction strategies for injecting drug use.

What does the Pharmacy Project provide?

The Pharmacy Project provides a two hour NSP information and training session to pharmacy staff and pharmacy students. These free sessions are delivered in the form of a seminar or workplace workshop and are presented in conjunction with Sam Liebelt from the WA Substance Users Association (WASUA).

Information provided includes:

- Effectiveness of needle and syringe programs in a harm minimisation context
- Blood borne virus transmission, specifically hepatitis C
- Increased awareness of illicit drug use issues for people who inject drugs
- Referral and treatment options for people who inject drugs
- Information regarding safer injecting practices and products (WASUA)
- Peer perspective of injecting drug use and associated harms (WASUA).



Photo: Magdalena at work

NSP information and training sessions have already been delivered to pharmacy staff across the metropolitan area, as well as Busselton and Albany. The Pharmacy Project has also provided information and training to pharmacy assistant trainee programs and pharmacy students at the University of WA, Murdoch University and Curtin University of Technology.

Why is the Pharmacy Project necessary?

Pharmacy needle and syringe programs form part of national public health strategies to reduce blood-borne virus transmission and other harms associated with injecting drug use. At present 99% of registered pharmacies retail safer injecting equipment and account for 40% of total needle and syringe distribution in WA.

Increasing the awareness and knowledge of pharmacy staff in relation to drug use issues will enhance service delivery, increase the awareness of hepatitis C, maximise early intervention opportunities for people at risk of experiencing problems, and improve referral pathways to specialist care. It is imperative this sector receive the most current information and training possible in this area.

For further information on this project please contact:

Magdalena Sotiroski

Pharmacy Needle and Syringe Workforce Development Officer

Hepatitis Council of WA

Phone: 9227 9800

Email: pharmacy@hepatitiswa.com.au

'A Fistful of Soap!'

The simple task of washing hands can dramatically reduce the presence of harmful bacteria and germs

On Tuesday 22nd May 2007, the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) alongside the WA Substance Users' Association (WASUA) launched the 'Wash Your Hands With a Fistful of Soap' Campaign'.

The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness about the simple practice of hand washing to help prevent the spread of hepatitis C and other infections among injecting drug users.

Fiona Poeder, Education Program Manager from AIVL demonstrated how easily the transmission of blood borne viruses and bacteria can occur during the injecting process using a visual handwashing tool originally developed for the food industry.

By applying a special powder that glowed under UV light on her hands to simulate bacteria, dirt and blood it was easy to see that everything that was touched transferred potentially harmful contaminants and that the act of washing one's hands can reduce the risk of transmission significantly.

With this current campaign, AIVL aims to incorporate the behaviour of hand washing into the injecting routine. Liquid soap from a pump is the most effective product. However, even in the absence of soap, the friction of scrubbing hands under running water can remove harmful bacteria from the surface of the hands.



In general, people should wash their hands for at least 10-15 seconds, about the time it takes to sing 'Row, row, row your boat,' and hands should be dried afterwards, preferably with a clean hand towel.

For more information and to access campaign material, please visit the AIVL website:

http://www.aivl.org.au/page_display.asp?pid=50

Four fact sheets, *New Hygiene - Do's and Don'ts, Endocarditis, Soap, Handwashing, Hep C and Injecting* and *Bacterial Sources, Dirty Hits and Abscesses* provide excellent information on this topic.

Statewide NSP Review

Health Outcomes International (HOI) has been commissioned to conduct a review of the Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program's statewide NSP. The review started in April 2007 and is expected to be completed in October 2007.

The review aims to identify gaps in existing services and opportunities to improving the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of the statewide NSP services. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected in order to:

- Provide a detailed description of NSP services within WA
- Explore service-providers' and other key stakeholders perceptions of NSP services within WA

- Explore injecting drug users' perceptions of NSP service provision within WA

The major findings of the review will be reported in the December issue of the NSP News.

Reminder!!

All NSP Coordinators are encouraged to participate in this review. HOI recently invited Coordinators to complete a survey. Please return completed surveys back to HOI by 23rd August, 2007.

If you did not receive a copy of this review or you wish to obtain further information, please contact Vanessa Hunt on 9388 4841 or nsp@health.wa.gov.au.

NSP Coordinator Training

In November 2006, the Workforce Development Branch of the Drug Alcohol Office (DAO) along with the SHBBVP and guest presenters delivered a three day NSP Coordinator Training course.

NSP coordinators from across the state convened at the Tradewinds Hotel, Fremantle, to improve their knowledge and skills in an area of preventative health which can be considered "difficult" or "contentious" at times.

Photo: Michael Doyle from the Aboriginal Health Council of WA presenting at the training course.



The first two days of the training aimed to support and enhance professional skills and covered a number of topics including understanding drug use; harm reduction; injecting drug use and blood-borne virus transmission; and prevention. The optional third day of training provided 'Train-the-Trainer' skills to support participants to train other workers and present on NSP issues.

Throughout the first two days of the course non-government agencies including the WA Substance Users' Association (WASUA), the WA AIDS Council (WAAC), the Hepatitis Council of WA and the Aboriginal Health Council of WA provided interesting and insightful presentations. Participants also had the opportunity to check out the WAAC mobile exchange van and view the types of products and educational information available to clients.

A review of the training course is currently underway. The next round of training is expected to be held in March 2008 and will be advertised in the next issue of the NSP News, December 2007.

Anex Conference: Illegal Drugs & Mental Health

The Annual Anex Conference is to be held in September.

Anex awarded 10 scholarships for NSP Coordinators and non-government organisation employees from WA to attend the 10th Annual Anex Conference, which will be held in Melbourne on the 3rd and 4th September, 2007.

This event always proves to be an invaluable opportunity to get up to date with current illicit drug-related issues, trends and priorities, and meet other delegates working in NSPs.

Anex is a non-government membership-based organization working towards a society in which all individuals and communities enjoy good health and well-being, free from drug-related harm.

In particular, Anex supports NSPs as a proven public health initiative and is committed to ensuring that the program is a well-supported and adequately resourced part of the solution to drug-related issues.

The Anex Conference 2007 will be held on the 20th anniversary of the initial legislative change in Australia enabling the operation of NSPs. This date marked a significant change in Australia's approach to illicit drug use.

Attendance at the conference will benefit a range of people from NSP services, organisations working with Indigenous Australians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, drug treatment providers, nurses, community development workers, peer educators, police, as well as researchers and health professionals working in a range of sectors including primary and mental health.

The theme of the conference is the association between illegal drugs and mental health. The conference will explore the scientific, legal, social, political, commercial and cultural aspects surrounding these issues.

If you would like more information, please visit the Anex website:

<http://www.anex.org.au/index.htm>

NSP Annual Report 2005/06

Findings from last year's report

The NSP Annual Report is distributed at the end of every financial year. It is an opportunity for NSP coordinators to raise issues and report on trends that have become apparent throughout the year.

In last year's Report, it was apparent many coordinators found that staff turnover at the DoH caused delays with orders and confusion for staff. In response to this, a generic email has since been established and there seems to be no further communication problems between NSP coordinators and the DoH. This generic email is nsp@health.wa.gov.au.

The NSP Annual Report for 2005/06 also revealed the following:

- 50% of coordinators reported seeking further information on injecting drug use matters, via methods including information pamphlets and attending training workshops
- 34% of coordinators reported receiving queries or concerns about NS disposal. The majority of these concerned inappropriately disposed NS that were found by members of the public
- In general, there has been an increase in the distribution of NS from the previous year.

Thank you to all NSP Coordinators who submitted a Report.

Reminder!!!

The NSP Annual Report 06/07 will be available from late August for all NSP coordinators to complete**. The Report will be web-based which we hope will be more convenient for you.

If you have problems accessing or completing the Report, please contact Georgiana Lilley at nsp@health.wa.gov.au

**Remember, under the Poisons Act Amendments 1994, it is a requirement of your NSP that you complete this Report, as it provides important information used for planning in the upcoming year.



Tips and Hints

Staff can be the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of Needle and Syringe Programs.

Here are some ideas that past attendees at NSP Coordinator trainings have reported as working well:

- Conduct regular in-service training sessions. Obvious enough but brief sessions on a regular basis keep NSP practices and procedures fresh in people's minds



- Ensure NSP information is included in orientation for new staff. High staff turnover is a constant problem so this strategy is essential
- Be opportunistic! Seize quick opportunities to spread the word and thank staff for their cooperation. Shift changeovers and staff meetings are ideal.
- Encourage staff to consider addictions differently. We all have our addictions, even if it's just coffee or chocolate
- Properly explained, harm minimisation makes real sense. Make sure that staff understand the principles behind NSP and things might be smoother

Good luck!

Information courtesy of the Drug and Alcohol Office, WA