

Effectiveness of Harm Reduction on Substance Abuse in Adults

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Abstract

In addressing the high-risk substance misuse and addictive disorders that have emerged as a public health crisis over the last 40 years, we looked into the following evidence based PICOT question: In homeless adults are harm reduction therapies compared to preventative therapies effective in reducing the rate of substance abuse in one year? Harm reduction therapy is an alternative approach that aims to decrease direct and indirect harm associated with drug use without necessarily preventing drug consumption. This form of therapy is guided by clinical ethics to institute policies and services, such as naloxone availability and clean needle exchanges for those with substance use disorders. In contrast, preventative policies that focus on interventions to prevent the use of drugs, such as reducing the prescription drug supply, may ultimately lead to increased illicit drug use and reduced quality of life. A literature search was conducted using the databases CINAHL, OneSearch, and Google Scholar, using the phrases “harm reduction”, “benefits of harm reduction,” “shelters,” “reducing substance use,” “homeless adults,” and “substance abuse.” Inclusion criteria involved homeless adults between the ages of 21-65 years, and articles limited to adolescents and children were excluded from the search. **Eleven articles were chosen that fell within the search criteria.** Research suggests that continued use of harm reduction therapies along with the integration of preventative substance use policies will help decrease substance abuse within the homeless population.

Key Words: Harm Reduction, Benefits of Harm Reduction, Shelters, Reducing Substance Use, Homeless Adults, Substance Abuse

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