

DRUGNET IRELAND



NEWSLETTER NO. 1

OCTOBER 1999

Introduction

This is the first edition of the DrugNet Ireland Newsletter, which will be produced bi-annually by the Drug Misuse Research Division of the Health Research Board. DrugNet has three main aims-


The first is to bring the latest information and research findings of relevance to people working in the drugs area in Ireland. Accordingly, contributions from community groups, policy makers, academics, treatment providers, educationalists etc. are very welcome. The success of the Newsletter will depend to a large extent on you the reader – we hope you will provide us with information and research findings which you wish to disseminate to others.

Secondly, DrugNet will provide an overview of ongoing activities - national and European, at the Drug Misuse Research Division. The DMRD is the designated Irish national Focal Point of the REITOX network (European Information Network on Drugs and Drug Addiction) which is co-ordinated by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. There are Focal Points in all EU countries. Focal Points act as an information resource to the EMCDDA in relation to the national situation and through the REITOX network are aware of EU and Member States activities in the drugs area. The Newsletter will help us disseminate this information. This first edition provides some background information on the Drug Misuse Research Division. The next edition will summarise research studies underway.

Thirdly, DrugNet Ireland will provide a window to drug-related developments in the European Commission – policy proposals, funding opportunities and upcoming events. It will compliment DrugNet Europe – the Newsletter of the EMCDDA, and highlight European developments of particular interest in the Irish context.

The Drug Misuse Research Division on a bi-monthly basis distributes DrugNet European and the same mailing list will be used for DrugNet Ireland. So if you are not on this mailing list and wish to receive the Newsletter(s) please contact us at the address on the back page. Also please pass the word on to any colleagues who may be interested.

Rosalyn Moran,
Head of Unit.

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Drug Misuse Research Division

The Drug Misuse Research Division (DMRD) of the Health Research Board is involved in national and international research and information activities in relation to drugs and their misuse. The Division is funded by national and EU sources and contract research.

Activities at National and Regional Levels

National Drug Treatment Reporting System

The Drug Misuse Research Division of the Health Research Board oversees the maintenance and development of a national epidemiological database on treated drug misuse in Ireland, i.e. the National Drug Treatment Reporting System - NDTRS. The system collects data on treated drug misuse throughout the country (e.g. number of contacts; type, duration and frequency of drug use; socio-demographic characteristics and living situation of treated drug misusers and associated risk behaviour). The NDTRS is undergoing continuous expansion to accommodate developments in service provision including community based services. At present plans to include GPs treating in the community and prison services is being implemented with the co-operation of all the different actors involved. The data gathered on drug misuse is analysed and trends are documented. Findings are presented in annual reports on *Treated Drug Misuse in Ireland*.

European Collaboration

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction - EMCDDA

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is a European Community institution providing information at the European level concerning drugs and drug addiction and their consequences. The EMCDDA works to improve the comparability of drug related data in the Member States, disseminates information relating to drugs and their misuse and co-operates with international bodies dealing with drug related issues.

The EMCDDA, in fulfilling its role, co-operates with a network of 'Focal Points' or national centres dealing with drug related issues in the Member States. This network is called the REITOX network (European Information Network on Drugs and Drug Addiction). The Drug Misuse Research Division is the designated Irish Focal Point of the REITOX network. Focal Points act as an information resource to the EMCDDA in relation to the national situation in each Member State. The Focal Point participates in several projects aiming to co-ordinate and harmonise drugs related information collection in the European Union.

Current contractual obligations of the Irish Focal Point in relation to the EMCDDA include the completion of an annual report on the drug situation in Ireland; provision of epidemiological information on an annual basis; participation in a number of *ad hoc* research and information tasks. Current projects include the development of an Irish component of a European

Database on Demand Reduction Activities; development of Irish component of an Early Warning System on New Synthetic Drugs. The DMRD is also working in conjunction with the EMCDDA towards the harmonisation of key indicators of drug related data in the European Union, i.e. demand for treatment by drug users; mortality and causes of death amongst drug addicts; incidence of infectious diseases amongst drug addicts; and to improve comparability of general population surveys and prevalence estimates of drug use. <http://www.emcdda.org>

Council of Europe, Pompidou Group

The Drug Misuse Research Division participates in the expert group on epidemiology of drug problems convened by the Pompidou Group of the Council of Europe. The Pompidou Group is an inter-governmental structure within the Council of Europe. Its mission is to promote and support, in a pan-european context, the formulation and application of national policies and programmes to combat problems linked to illicit drugs. The role of the expert group on epidemiology is to collect and analyse data at city level through the multi-city network and to improve/develop associated methodologies. Dublin has participated in the multi-city network since the early 80's.

The Drug Misuse Research Division's contribution to the work on epidemiology has been particularly important in the development of the first treatment demand protocol, which was pilot-tested in Dublin and London before being extended progressively to more than 20 other European cities. Data and trends on treatment demand are now collected on an annual basis. The treatment demand instrument will soon be applied

at national level through the EMCDDA and will be known as a joint PG/EMCDDA protocol.

<http://www.coe.fr/cm/stat/1999/june/54.htm>

Recent Publications from DMRD

O'Brien, M., and R. Moran (1998). *Overview of Drug Issues in Ireland : A Resource Document*. Dublin : Health Research Board.

Gemmell, C., Moran, R., Crowley, J., Courtney, R.. (1999). *Final Report: Literature Review on The Relation Between Drug Use, Impaired Driving, And Traffic Accidents*. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Lisbon.

Gemmell, C., Moran, R., Crowley, J., Courtney, R. (1999). *An Inventory of Literature On The Relation Between Drug Use, Impaired Driving, And Traffic Accidents*. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Lisbon.

Moran, R. (1999). *The Availability, Use and Evaluation of the Provision of Creche Facilities in Association With Drug Treatment*. Dublin: The Health Research Board.

Duff, P., Moran, R., & O' Brien, M. (1999). *The Feasibility of the inclusion of general practitioners and prisoners in the National Drug Treatment Reporting System : Summary and plans for the implementation of the NDTRS in prison and community GP services*. Report for the Community Health Division, Department of Health and Children. Dublin: Health Research Board.

Minister Launches Report on Crèche Study & Announces Finance for Training of Staff in Crèches for Drug Misusers

On the 13th October 1999, Mr. O'Donoghue, T.D., The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, launched a report '**The Availability, Use and Provision of Crèche Facilities in Association with Drug Treatment**'¹ written by the Drugs Misuse Research Division of the Health Research Board and **announced finance for the training of creche staff in drug treatment centres.** The Minister making this announcement said:

"My Department supports the development of childcare facilities and quality childcare provision in disadvantaged communities under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. This programme is part-funded by the EU and has a budget of approximately £11 million for the period 1998-1999. The primary aim of the programme is to enable parents in disadvantaged communities to access employment and education and training opportunities. Arising out of this research project, which is being launched today, my Department is targeting a specific initiative for former drug users under the programme, and involves a training programme for staff working in crèches in drug treatment centres, which is being devised in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children and the Eastern Health Board. This initiative aims to ensure that best practice obtains in relation to childcare arrangements in these centres. I have allocated £30,000 to this project from the Department's Equal Opportunities Programme."

¹ Moran, R. 1999. The Availability, Use and Provision of Crèche Facilities in Association with Drug Treatment. Health Research Board, Dublin. Copies of the report are available free of charge from Dora at the Health Research Board, Fax. No. 01 - 661 1856 or email dora@hrb.ie
The report can also be downloaded from the HRB website at <http://www.hrb.ie>

Professor Michael Murphy, Chairperson of the Health Research Board said 'The report is an important contribution to our understanding of the support needed by drug misusers who are trying to avail of treatment and rehabilitation'. Professor Murphy, added that he was pleased 'that the Drug Misuse Research Division, under the direction of Ms. Rosalyn Moran was contributing to the improvement of services for drug misusers in this way'.

The Study & Main Findings

In the course of the study - parents, children and staff from 6 of the 9 drug treatment centres in the Eastern Health Board area which provide crèches, were interviewed. The study found that the current level of crèche provision was inadequate. The results identified a number of significant benefits associated with the provision of crèches for each of these user groups. For example:

- The availability of a crèche made it possible for a number of **parents** to access treatment for their drug dependence. Participation in treatment is seen as an important goal with implication for the drug users' and their families' wellbeing.

'The study found that drug misusing parents [mostly women] frequently found themselves in a situation where they wanted to take more active steps to tackle their drug dependence but were unable to do so as they did not have access to regular childminding arrangements. The lack of childcare also inhibited or made it impossible for clients to avail of the educational, training and employment opportunities which could break the cycle of deprivation of which many were part'.

- **children** enjoyed the attention and activities provided in the crèche environment;
- **treatment staff** felt that the crèche provided the opportunity to

administer treatment in privacy to parents and this was important therapeutically

- **crèche leaders** felt that children benefited emotionally and educationally.

Main Recommendations

The study makes a number of recommendations that can feed into discussions regarding the future planning and development of such crèche facilities. These include:

- *Drop-in crèche facilities* should be provided in all treatment centres where drug misusers access assessment, prescription, clinical or counseling services
- There is an urgent need to provide *full-day crèche facilities* which would facilitate those drug misusing parents who wish to enter more intensive treatment / rehabilitation programmes or avail of educational, training or work opportunities
- Crèche provision needs to be included in service delivery policy and taken into account at the planning and design stage of treatment facilities
- Training is needed for crèche workers new to the drug treatment context regarding the needs of drug misusers and their children.

Press Release: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Council decides new drug 4-MTA should be placed under control

The Council of the European Union adopted a unanimous decision on 13 September defining the new synthetic drug 4-MTA (4-methylthioamphetamine) as a substance to be placed under

control measures and criminal penalties in the EU Member States.

The decision, taken in the framework of the 1997 Joint Action on New Synthetic Drugs, stems from recent findings on the health and social risks of the drug released by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). These are summarised in a 'Report on the Risk Assessment of 4-MTA' adopted on 19 May in Lisbon by the EU drug agency's Scientific Committee and experts.

The Report recommends that the drug be controlled largely due to the high risks of overdose associated with it. These risks result from the slow onset of the drugs' effects – often misinterpreted by users as the result of a weak dose, leading to the consumption of more pills – and their long-lasting nature. Also highlighted in the Report are the serious risks resulting from mixing the drug with alcohol, MDMA, amphetamines, ephedrine and certain foods.

Following its adoption, the Report was submitted on 24th May to the German Presidency of the Horizontal Drugs Group (HDG) of the Council and to the European Commission for further action in accordance with Article 5 of the Joint Action (procedures for bringing specific new synthetic drugs under control). The Report was presented and discussed at the meeting of the HDG on 18 June and, on 7 July, the Commission submitted a proposal to the Council calling for the drug to be brought under control.

Under this decision, and in accordance with their national laws, Member States shall take a maximum of three months to introduce the necessary measures to submit 4-MTA to control measures and criminal penalties as provided for under

the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

This week's decision confirms the speed and effectiveness of the early-warning and risk-assessment mechanism provided under the two-year old Joint Action. The decision by the Council came just six months after first notification of the substance by the EMCDDA and Europol.

Before the summer, the EMCDDA issued a warning on 4-MTA to its national networks in reaction to misleading and scientifically unfounded media reports suggesting that 4-MTA is '33 times stronger than normal ecstasy'. The agency was concerned that this type of coverage may inadvertently promote use of the drug among ecstasy users and lead them to expect a relatively quick and dramatic effect.

4-MTA is generally found in the form of cream-coloured pills or tablets and has the street name 'flat-liners'.

Ireland - Legislation is being prepared regarding 4MTA and a number of other drugs.

15/9/99 EMCDD, Rua da Cruz de Santa Apolónia, 23-25, PT-1149-045 Lisbon.

Recent Publications: National and International

E.M.C.D.D.A. (1998) *Guidelines for the evaluation of drug prevention. A manual for programme-planners and evaluators.* Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Griffiths, P., Vingoe, L., Jensen, K., Sherval, J., Lewis, R., Hartnol, R., and M. Neilson. (1999) E.M.C.D.D.A. *INSIGHTS 1. New Trends in Synthetic Drugs in the European Union. Epidemiology and Demand Reduction Responses.* Luxembourg. Office for

Official Publications of the European Communities.

Korf, D. J., Riper, H., Freeman, M., Lewis, R., Grant, I., Jacob, E., Mougin, C., and M. Nilson. (1999) E.M.C.D.D.A. *INSIGHTS 2. Outreach Work Among Drug Users in Europe. Concepts, Practice and Terminology.* Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

E.M.C.D.D.A. (1999) *Report on the risk assessment of MBDB in the framework of the joint action on new synthetic drugs.* Luxembourg. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Coveney, E., Murphy-Lawless, J., Redmond, D., and S. Sheridan (1999) *Prevalence, Profiles and Policy. A case study of drug use in north inner city Dublin.* Dublin: North Inner City Drugs Task Force.

Pringle, D G., Walsh, J., & M. Hennessy. (1999) *Poor People, Poor Places. A Geography of Poverty and Deprivation in Ireland.* Dublin. Oak Tree Press.

Berridge, V. (1999) *Opium and the People. Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England.* Dublin. Free Association Books / London / New York.

O'Gorman, A., (1999) *No Room for Complacency. Families, Communities and HIV.* Dublin. Cáirde.

South Eastern Health Board, *Drug News Update* (1999). South Eastern Health Board, Tel: (056) 20400.

Health Promotion Department, North Western Health Board 1999. *North West Inter-Agency Drug Group - Annual Report 1998.* North Western Health Board, Tel: (072) 52000.

European Addiction Training Institute
(1999) *Handbook on Local Drug Policy*.
The Netherlands.

Upcoming Events

The Psychological Society of Ireland,
Thirtieth Annual Conference,
Rochestown Park Hotel, Douglas, Cork,
11th to 14th November 1999. Contact :
Contact Conference Secretary, PSI, CX
House, 2A Corn Exchange Place,
Poolbeg St., Dublin 2. Tel/Fax :
6717122.

Funding and Fellowships

EMCDDA

Call for Tenders issued by the EMCDDA in relation to drug research are published on their website on an ongoing basis. If you are interested in tendering for any EMCDDA contracts you should be included in the EMCDDA list of potential contractors as resulting from the Call for Expression of Interest – CEI, published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, Series S (OJ S 47-07.03.1998). Applications forms for the CEI List are downloadable at <http://www.emcdda. or /html/cei.html>

Health Research Board

Each year, the HRB provides a number of fellowship awards targeted at different groups within the health research community. The Board is presently inviting applications from health researchers, medical doctors, scientists, nurses and midwives for the following fellowship awards in 2000.

* Clinical research training fellowships are designed to enable medical and dental graduates at any stage in their

career, up to and including Senior Registrar, Lecturer or equivalent levels to gain specialised clinical research training in a biomedical field.

* Postdoctoral research fellowships are designed to enable researchers with a PhD, MD or equivalent research experience to develop their research careers at an advanced level in a biomedical field.

* Health services research fellowships provide an opportunity to graduates with appropriate experience to undertake health services research in Ireland. The research may be interdisciplinary in nature and may involve clinical, epidemiological, public health, statistics, health economics, social science, operational and management disciplines.

* Clinical research fellowships in nursing and midwifery provide experienced nurses and midwives with an opportunity to carry out research in clinical nursing and midwifery, leading to a postgraduate qualification at masters and doctoral level.

Application forms and further information on the above are available on the HRB website at www.hrb.ie or from the Health Research Board.

Your Input

If you have information or research findings you wish to disseminate or news of forthcoming events which you would like to appear in the next edition of DrugNet Ireland, please forward for the attention of:

Ms. Rosalyn Moran
Drug Misuse Research Division

▶ Drug Misuse Research Division
The Health Research Board

Accessing DrugNet Ireland and/or DrugNet Europe

DrugNet Ireland and DrugNet Europe will be available on the Health Research Board's website (<http://www.hrb.ie>) as they become available.

However if you wish to receive future copies of DrugNet Ireland or DrugNet Europe directly, please complete the following form and indicate whether you would prefer to receive an electronic or paper copy. Please return the form to:

Ms Dora Daly, Drug Misuse Research Division, Health Research Board
73 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2.

OR

E-mail your request to dora@hrb.ie

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Please include me on your Mailing List for:	I would like to receive (please tick <u>one</u>):
DrugNet Ireland <input type="checkbox"/>	→ An electronic copy <input type="checkbox"/> or a paper copy <input type="checkbox"/>
DrugNet Europe <input type="checkbox"/>	→ An electronic copy <input type="checkbox"/> or a paper copy <input type="checkbox"/>
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