

Enhanced surveillance of blood borne viruses in drug users in Wales

Annual report: January 2012 to December 2012

KEY POINTS

Drug history

- 742 surveillance forms were received by Public Health Wales for 731 individuals seen by substance misuse services in Wales between January 2012 and December 2012
- Of the 700 individuals for whom injecting history was known, 72% (n=505) reported having ever injected drugs (Table 1). The remaining 28% (n=195) reported never injecting drugs
- Clients who reported a history of injecting drug use and seen in this period (n=505) were most frequently men, had a median age of 34 years (range: 19-62) and most often had a history of injecting drugs for more than 10 years (Table 1). In addition, 23% reported being homeless in the previous year and 59% reported having previously spent time in prison
- Of those who reported ever injecting drugs (n=505), 74% had injected heroin in the previous year, 31% crack cocaine, 26% crack and heroin combined, 39% amphetamines, and 11% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs (Table 2)
- By comparison, in 2011, of those who reported injecting drugs, 54% had injected heroin in the previous year, 19% crack cocaine, 24% amphetamine, and 7% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs
- Where recorded, in 2012, 66% (n=474/719) of clients reported that they had been prescribed opiate substitution therapy in the previous 12 months (Table 2)

Positivity rates

- Of the 731 individuals for whom a form was received, 686 individuals (94%) were tested for HIV antibody, 707 individuals (97%) were tested for HBV core antibody and 711 (97%) were tested for HCV antibody (Table 3)
- 19% (95/491) of those tested for HCV and who reported injecting drugs were positive for HCV (Table 3), compared to 1.6% (3/189) of never-injectors. Overall, the HCV positivity rate was 14% (98/711)
- 9% (5/56) of clients who were tested for HCV and who reported injecting steroids in the last 12 months, were positive for HCV
- Trends in younger clients, and those with a shorter injecting history, may reflect trends in recently acquired infection (incidence)
 - 8% clients (4/50) aged under 25 years, who reported injecting drugs, tested positive for HCV (Table 3)
 - 9% clients (8/88) reporting a history of injecting drugs for 2 years or less tested positive for HCV (Table 3)
- For comparison, in 2011, the HCV-specific rates in under 25 year olds who reported injecting drugs, and in those injecting for 2 years or less, were the same as for 2012
- In 2012, one individual tested positive for HIV antibodies, and this individual reported never injecting drugs
- 4% (18/486) clients who were tested for HBV core antibodies and who had a history of injecting drug use were positive for HBV, compared to 1.1% (2/190) of never-injectors. Overall, 3% of all clients tested (20/707) were positive for HBV core antibodies (Table 3)
- None of the 228 individuals who were tested for HBV surface antigen were positive (Table 3), indicating that they were not currently infected

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of clients who reported ever injecting drugs, January 2012 to December 2012

Service HB	All clients	Clients who reported injecting drugs	% male	Median age (range)	% born in UK	% homeless in previous year	% been in prison previously	Mode years injecting
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	<10	<10	100%	35 (29-41)	100%	0%	50%	3-4 yrs
Aneurin Bevan	331	217	79%	33 (19-61)	98%	26%	63%	>10 yrs
Betsi Cadwaladr	245	174	73%	37 (19-56)	97%	25%	62%	>10 yrs
Cardiff & Vale	22	16	88%	36 (29-50)	94%	31%	50%	<1 yr *
Cwm Taf	36	23	74%	36 (21-45)	96%	22%	52%	>10 yrs
Hywel Dda	87	66	70%	31 (19-62)	100%	8%	47%	>10 yrs
Powys	<10	<10	71%	32 (30-38)	86%	29%	43%	>10 yrs
Wales	731	505	76%	34 (19-62)	97%	23%	59%	>10 yrs

Notes: * please note there are low numbers for C&V, which included 5 clients who reported injecting for <1yr. Across the whole sample, 31 clients were of unknown injecting history and 195 reported never injecting drugs; these were excluded from analysis. Of those who reported injecting drugs, 1 client was of unknown sex and 52 clients were of unknown age. It was not known where 1 client was born, if 2 clients had been homeless and if 6 clients had been in prison.

Table 2: Percentage of clients reporting opiate substitution therapy (OST) within the last 12 months, the percentage reporting ever injecting drugs and, of those who injected drugs, the percentages of drugs injected within the last 12 months

Service HB	Number clients	% receiving OST	% who inject drugs	% heroin	% crack cocaine	% crack and heroin combined	% steroids	% amphetamines
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	<10	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Aneurin Bevan	331	71%	71%	88%	41%	30%	17%	48%
Betsi Cadwaladr	245	65%	72%	69%	35%	33%	9%	35%
Cardiff & Vale	22	73%	76%	56%	6%	13%	0%	6%
Cwm Taf	36	39%	64%	74%	17%	9%	4%	52%
Hywel Dda	87	59%	79%	48%	3%	2%	6%	24%
Powys	<10	75%	88%	86%	29%	29%	0%	14%
Wales	731	66%	72%	74%	31%	26%	11%	39%

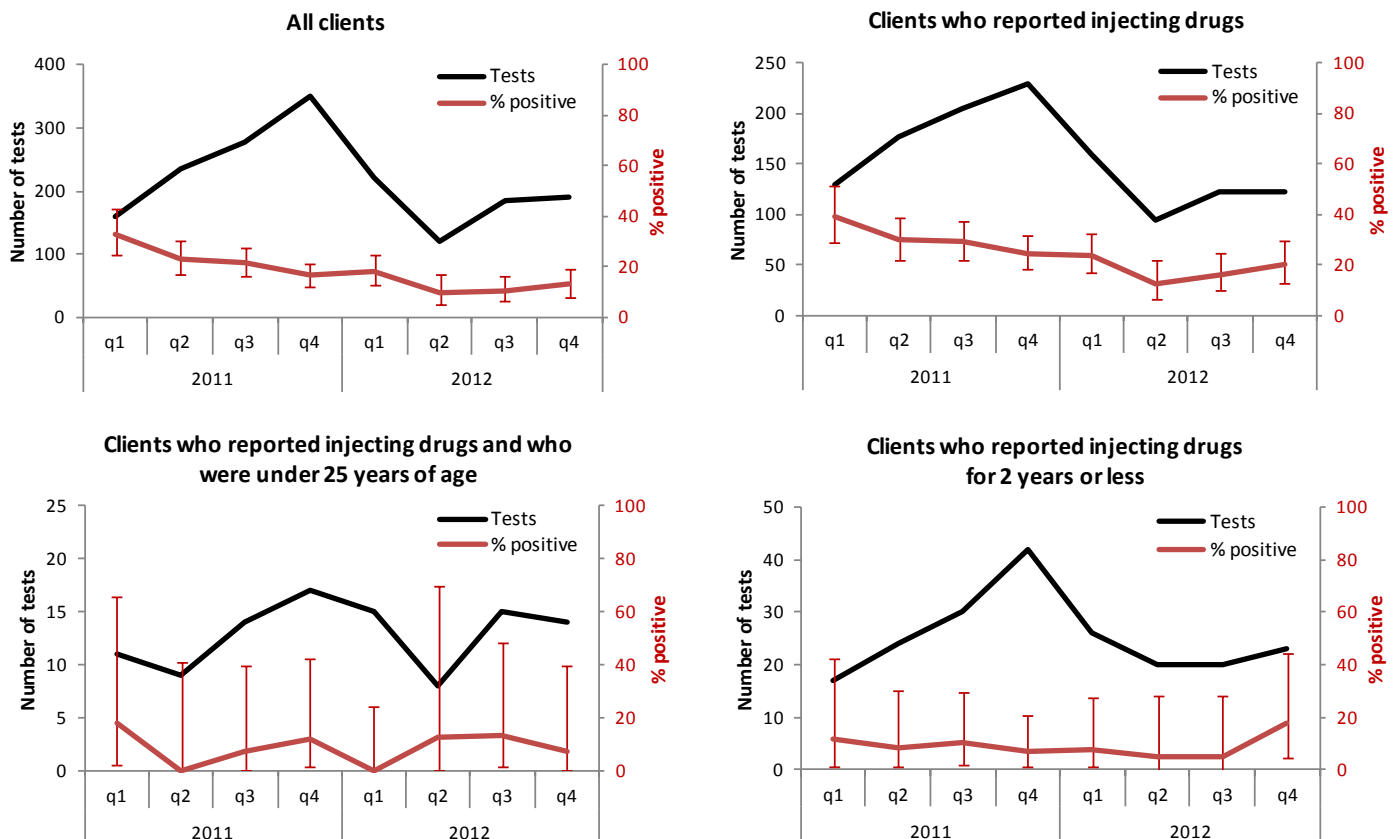
Notes: For a small number of clients, it was not known if the individual received OST or if they had ever injected drugs. Those of unknown status were not included when calculating the % clients receiving OST and the % who inject drugs.

Table 3: Percentage of clients tested who were positive for BBV, January 2012 to December 2012

Service HB	Clients (Forms)	HCV Ab (n=711 tested)				HIV Ab (n= 686)	HBV core Ab (n=707)	HBV sAg* (n=228)
		All clients	Clients who inject drugs	Clients who inject drugs, aged <25yrs	Clients injecting ≤2yrs	All clients	All clients	All clients
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	<10	50%	50%	-	-	-	0%	-
Aneurin Bevan	331 (339)	7%	10%	11%	6%	-	0%	0%
Betsi Cadwaladr	245 (246)	24%	33%	8%	20%	-	7%	0%
Cardiff & Vale	22 (22)	24%	31%	-	14%	-	5%	0%
Cwm Taf	36 (36)	15%	25%	-	0%	-	4%	0%
Hywel Dda	87 (89)	8%	9%	0%	0%	-	0%	0%
Powys	<10	0%	0%	-	0%	-	0%	-
Wales	731 (742)	14%	19%	8%	9%	<1%	3%	0%

Notes: * recording of this test has only been available since the start of 2012, and it indicates whether or not an individual is currently infected with HBV. Please note that not all individuals were tested for all infections; of the 731 individuals for whom a form was received, 686 individuals (94%) were tested for HIV antibody, 707 individuals (97%) were tested for HBV core antibody, and 711 (97%) were tested for HCV antibody. Data on prevalence of HIV by LHB of service suppressed due to small numbers.

Figure 1: Number of HCV tests reported to Public Health Wales, by quarter, and the percentage of which were positive, January 2011 to December 2012. Error bars represent 95% CI (Poisson, exact)



Notes on methods

To assist Public Health Wales assess trends in the rates of blood borne viral hepatitis and HIV in Wales, substance misuse services in Wales offering dried blood spot testing collect information from clients seen; an anonymous unlinked surveillance form containing information about the client is completed by the drug service worker and sent to Public Health Wales. Dried blood spot samples are sent to the Public Health Wales laboratory in Cardiff and are tested for markers of exposure to hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. A proportion of people who are antibody positive will be currently infected, and are at risk of transmitting virus to other people. The hepatitis B core antibody test used is likely to underestimate the prevalence of exposure to hepatitis B. Hepatitis B core antibody positivity indicates current or past infection, but does not differentiate infection from previous vaccination. The HBV surface antigen test indicates a current infection. Of note, since the use of the new form in the start of 2012, 38 out of 245 individuals were tested by venepuncture, not DBS.

Data presented in this report are for clients seen by substance misuse services between January 2012 and December 2012. Data are included only for those clients for whom a surveillance form was completed and sent to Public Health Wales. Figure 1 contains data from 2011 and 2012 by quarter.

Report prepared by Public Health Wales Health Protection Service

For further information contact: noel.craine@wales.nhs.uk or daniel.thomas@wales.nhs.uk

Data based on forms received as at 31st March 2013