

Enhanced surveillance of blood borne viruses in drug users in Wales

Annual report: January 2013 to December 2013

KEY POINTS

Drug history

- 947 surveillance forms were received by Public Health Wales from individuals seen by substance misuse services in Wales between January 2013 and December 2013
- Of the 890 forms where injecting history was recorded, 71% (n=632) reported a history of injecting drugs (Table 1). The remaining 29% (n=258) reported no history of injecting drugs
- Forms from clients seen in 2013 that showed a history of injecting drug use (n=632) were most frequently from males, with a median age of 35 years (range: 18-64) and most often had a history of injecting drugs for more than 10 years (Table 1). In addition, 29% of forms recorded homelessness in the previous year and 62% recorded that time had been spent in prison
- Of forms that reported a history of drug injection (n=632), 68% had injected heroin in the previous year, 22% crack cocaine, 19% crack and heroin combined, 36% amphetamines, and 11% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs (Table 2)
- Where recorded, in 2013, 65% (n=601/920) of forms reported that opiate substitution therapy had been prescribed in the previous 12 months (Table 2)

Positivity rates

- Of the 947 forms received, 870 (92%) reported testing for HIV antibody, 842 (89%) reported HBV testing (core antibody and/or surface antigen test) and 929 (98%) reported testing for HCV antibody (Table 3)
- Of forms where an HCV test was performed and the client reported injecting drugs, 20% (125/619) were positive for HCV (Table 3), compared to 1.2% (3/255) of never-injectors. Overall, the HCV positivity rate was 14% (130/929)
- 14% (10/70) of forms that recorded an HCV test being performed in a client who had injected steroids in the last 12 months, were positive for HCV, compared to 8% (5/62) in 2012, however this difference was not statistically significant (χ^2 , p=0.26).
- Trends in younger clients, and those with a shorter injecting history, may reflect trends in recently acquired infection (incidence)
 - 17% (8/46) of forms from clients aged under 25 years, who reported injecting drugs, tested positive for HCV (Table 3), compared to 8% (4/53) of clients in 2012, however this difference was not statistically significant (χ^2 , p=0.13)
 - 15% (14/96) of forms from clients reporting a history of injecting drugs for 2 years or less tested positive for HCV (Table 3), compared to 9% (8/91) of clients in 2012, however this difference was not statistically significant (χ^2 , p=0.22)
- In 2013, one individual tested positive for HIV antibodies, and this individual reported never injecting drugs
- 2.0% (9/461) of forms from clients who had an HBV core antibody test and who had a history of injecting drug use were positive for HBV, compared to 0% (0/193) of never-injectors. Overall, 1.6% of forms from all clients tested (11/702) were positive for HBV core antibodies (Table 3)
- One of the 590 forms from individuals who were tested for HBV surface antigen was positive (Table 3), indicating that they were currently infectious.

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of clients who reported ever injecting drugs, January 2013 to December 2013

Service HB	All forms	Forms indicating drug injection	% male	Median age (range)	% born in UK	% homeless in previous year	% been in prison previously	Mode years injecting
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aneurin Bevan	330	214	73%	34 (18-58)	96%	38%	64%	>10 yrs
Betsi Cadwaladr	299	223	72%	37 (18-64)	97%	27%	59%	>10 yrs
Cardiff & Vale	23	18	67%	32.5 (21-50)	100%	39%	83%	>10 yrs
Cwm Taf	60	32	75%	37 (21-55)	100%	16%	57%	>10 yrs
Hywel Dda	215	129	70%	34 (18-57)	99%	20%	63%	>10 yrs
Powys	20	16	63%	30.5 (21-41)	100%	19%	47%	>10 yrs
Wales	947	632	72%	35 (18-64)	97%	29%	62%	>10 yrs

Notes: Across the whole sample, 57 forms gave injecting history as unknown and 258 reported never injecting drugs; these were excluded from analysis. Of those who reported injecting drugs, 4 clients were of unknown sex and 122 clients were of unknown age. It was not known where 2 clients were born, if 7 clients had been homeless and if 13 clients had been in prison. The percentages provided are based on those forms where the variable of interest was reported.

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 of forms	% receiving OST	% injecting drugs	% heroin	% crack cocaine	% crack and heroin combined	% steroids	% amphetamines
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aneurin Bevan	330	80%	74%	76%	24%	19%	12%	36%
Betsi Cadwaladr	299	67%	76%	70%	34%	32%	11%	35%
Cardiff & Vale	23	78%	78%	89%	11%	11%	0%	28%
Cwm Taf	60	34%	55%	75%	6%	6%	13%	66%
Hywel Dda	215	48%	63%	50%	3%	2%	12%	35%
Powys	20	68%	80%	44%	25%	25%	0%	13%
Wales	947	65%	71%	68%	22%	19%	11%	36%

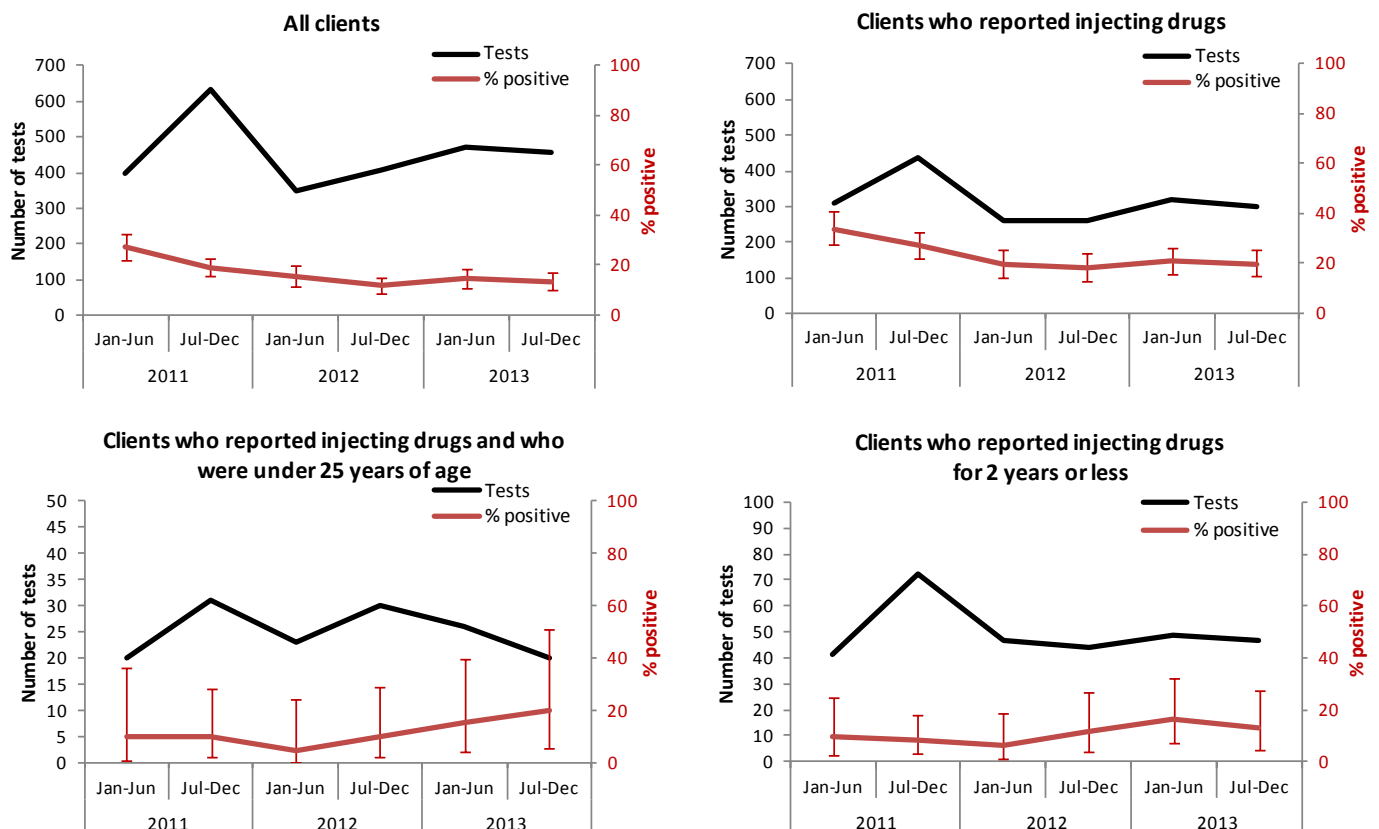
Notes: For a small number of clients, it was not known if the individual received OST or if they had ever injected drugs. Those of unknown status were not included when calculating the % clients receiving OST and the % who inject drugs.

Table 3: Percentage of clients tested who were positive for BBV, January 2013 to December 2013

Service HB	Forms	HCV Ab (n=929 tested)				HIV Ab (n= 870)	HBV core Ab (n=702)	HBV sAg* (n=590)
		All forms	Forms indicating drug injection	Forms indicating drug injection and aged <25yrs	Forms indicating injecting ≤2yrs	All forms	All forms	All forms
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aneurin Bevan	330	12%	18%	13%	12%	-	1%	0%
Betsi Cadwaladr	299	20%	26%	31%	21%	-	4%	1%
Cardiff & Vale	23	13%	17%	0%	0%	-	13%	0%
Cwm Taf	60	17%	22%	50%	100%	-	0%	0%
Hywel Dda	215	9%	16%	8%	6%	-	0%	0%
Powys	20	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	0%	0%
Wales	947	14%	20%	17%	15%	<1%	2%	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 947 forms received, 870 (92%) indicated that HIV antibody had been tested for, 702 forms (74%) indicated HBV core antibody test had been performed and 929 (98%) indicated for HCV antibody test had been performed. 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 2012 to December 2013. 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. Analysis of 2013 data was based on number of forms received, although clients can be tested more than once and so there may be more than one form for a single client. Analysis of the 2012 data linked forms from the same client and found 706 clients had provided 742 forms. 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. 632 of the 947 forms received in 2013 were new forms that record sample type (venepuncture or DBS). Of note, 76 out of the 632 new forms recorded testing by venepuncture, not DBS (143 unknown sample type).

Data presented in this report are for clients seen by substance misuse services between January 2013 and December 2013. 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, 2012 and 2013 by half years.

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 2014