

Enhanced surveillance of blood borne virus in drug users in Wales Annual report: October 2010 to September 2011

Key points

- Seven hundred and seventy-nine surveillance forms were received by Public Health Wales for 764 people seen by substance misuse services in Wales between October 2010 and September 2011
- Substance misuse service clients seen in this period were most frequently men, had a median age of 36 years (range: 17-77), and had a history of injecting drugs for more than 10 years
- Twenty-four percent reported being homeless in the previous year and 57% reported having previously spent time in prison
- Where reported, 52% had injected heroin in the previous year, 17% crack cocaine, 20% amphetamine, and 5% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs
- Over one fifth (23%) of the sample reported never having had injected drugs
- Where reported, 80% were currently undertaking opiate substitution treatment
- From the 779 reports received, results were available for 757 HIV tests, 759 hepatitis B tests, and 767 hepatitis C tests
- No samples tested positive for HIV antibodies
- Five percent of clients tested positive for hepatitis B core antibodies; this figure increased to 6% amongst those with a history of injecting drug use
- Twenty-six percent tested positive for hepatitis C antibodies, and 34% amongst injecting drug users
- Trends in younger clients, and those with a shorter injecting history, may reflect trends in recently acquired infection (incidence)
- During this period, 9% of clients aged 25 years or less tested positive for hepatitis C
- Thirteen percent of clients reporting a history of injecting drugs for 2 years or less tested positive for hepatitis C
- Eleven of the clients who reported injecting steroids in the previous year (30% of those reporting injecting steroids) tested positive for hepatitis C and 1 client (3%) tested positive for hepatitis B. All 12 clients also reported injecting heroin.

Results

Table 1. Proportion of clients testing positive: October 2010 to September 2011

LHB of service	Reports received ¹	HIV antibody positive	Hepatitis B core antibody positive	Hepatitis C antibody positive	% clients aged ≤ 25 yrs testing positive for hepatitis C ²	% of clients with ≤ 2 yrs history of IDU testing positive for hepatitis C ³
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	22	0%	0%	43%	33%	0%
Aneurin Bevan	256	0%	4%	16%	12%	10%
Betsi Cadwaladr	386	0%	7%	36%	7%	18%
Cardiff & Vale	53	0%	2%	9%	0%	7%
Cwm Taf	2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hywel Dda	42	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%
Powys	18	0%	0%	18%	0%	-
Wales	779	0%	5%	26%	9%	13%

¹ Test result not provided for a small proportion of clients

² Interpret with caution: Only small numbers of clients under 25 years tested (n=67)

³ Interpret with caution: Only small numbers of clients reporting a history of injecting less than 3 years tested (n=85)

Table 2. Characteristics of clients: October 2010 to September 2011 (includes only those for whom a surveillance form was received)

LHB of service	Reports received	Male ¹	Median age (range) ²	% born in UK	% homeless in previous year	% previously been in prison	Most frequent number of years injecting
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	22	59%	31 (22-45)	95%	27%	55%	>10 yrs
Aneurin Bevan	256	73%	33 (17-77)	95%	23%	60%	>10 yrs
Betsi Cadwaladr	386	72%	37 (18-64)	97%	29%	60%	>10 yrs
Cardiff & Vale	53	68%	33 (20-55)	91%	10%	54%	Never ³
Cwm Taf	2	100%	28 (28-28)	100%	0%	100%	3-4 yrs/>10 yrs
Hywel Dda	42	69%	37 (22-54)	100%	12%	34%	Never
Powys	18	67%	39 (24-47)	100%	11%	22%	5-10 yrs
Wales	779	71%	36 (17-77)	96%	24%	57%	>10 yrs

¹ Sex not provided for 2 clients

² Age not provided for 18% (138) of clients

³ 'Never' is a reporting option given to clients when asked about injecting drug use history

Table 3. Reported injecting drug use in past 12 months and proportion on opiate substitute treatment (where reported), October 2010 to September 2011

LHB of service	Heroin	Crack cocaine	Crack and heroin together	Steroids	Amphetamine	Opiate substitute
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	68%	10%	5%	0%	40%	95%
Aneurin Bevan	47%	6%	6%	5%	14%	79%
Betsi Cadwaladr	58%	28%	25%	7%	26%	77%
Cardiff & Vale	51%	6%	4%	2%	10%	94%
Cwm Taf	100%	0%	0%	50%	50%	100%
Hywel Dda	25%	5%	3%	3%	10%	83%
Powys	28%	6%	0%	0%	0%	83%
Wales	52%	17%	15%	5%	20%	80%

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 have volunteered to take dried blood spot samples 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. It is important to note that results of venepuncture based testing are not systematically collected under this surveillance scheme.

This is the first annual report of this project. Data presented in this report are for clients seen by substance misuse services between October 2010 and September 2011. Data are included only for those clients for whom a surveillance form was completed and sent to Public Health Wales.

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