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Summary

The Drug Data Warehouse: Linking data on drug misusers and drug-misusing offenders

Tim Millar, Maryam Ahmad, Anna Richardson, Sara Skodbo, Michael Donmall and Andrew Jones

Background

The Drug Data Warehouse is a newly created database that, for the first time, anonymously links for analytical purposes, a range of drug treatment and criminal justice datasets on drug misusers, with a particular focus on drug misusing offenders. It is a resource which will aid understanding of the complexity of drug misusers' contact with services, in turn informing their effective management.

This report introduces the Drug Data Warehouse and presents findings from initial, descriptive analysis of the data.

Key findings

- The Drug Data Warehouse comprises anonymised information for over one million drug-misusing individuals identified either within the Criminal Justice System and/or through contact with drug treatment services between 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2009. Linking information on these individuals enables us to analyse their contacts with, the drug treatment and criminal justice systems over time.

- Proportionately, opiate and/or crack cocaine users dominated the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) and other drug treatment groups, while they formed a minority (44%) of drug users assessed by the prison and probation services.

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Drug

Drug misusing offenders

Drug treatment

Drug Interventions Programme

Offending

Offender Assessment System

Prolific and other Priority Offenders

Drug test

Police National Computer

Data linking

Home Office

- Many drug misusers have had contact with drug treatment services and are known to the Criminal Justice System via either the probation/prison service or the Drug Interventions Programme. Furthermore, 43% of individuals experienced some type of contact with the Criminal Justice System but without accessing a treatment service which highlights the potential scope to engage further with this key group.

- Although further, more detailed analysis is required to examine fully, initial analyses of the Drug Data Warehouse indicates that about one-third of positive DIP drug testers had another positive test within 12 months. Likewise, about one-third of individuals who had finished a treatment journey re-presented to treatment within 12 months reflecting the relapsing nature of much drug misuse and the fact that it often takes more than one attempt to overcome addiction.

Conclusion

The successful construction of the Drug Data Warehouse has demonstrated that it is feasible to link relevant separate drug treatment and criminal justice databases in a secure and anonymised way, creating a resource with enormous potential for analyses that will advance knowledge and improve understanding of drug misusers and drug misusing offenders.