Exploring recent trends in drug use in Scotland
Dr. Andrew McAuley
@arjmcauley
Senior Research Fellow
Glasgow Caledonian University
Principal Scientist
Health Protection Scotland
trend
/trɛnd/
noun
plural noun: trends
• 1. a general direction in which something is developing or changing.
Presentation outline

• Injecting drug use
  – Heroin
  – Cocaine
  – NPS

• ‘Street’ / ‘Designer’ benzodiazepines

• Anticonvulsant drugs
Warning: Lots of Data Ahead!
Injecting drug use....

- Heroin
- Cocaine
Drugs injected in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Drugs injected in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Drugs injected in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Cocaine injecting in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Cocaine injecting in the last six months among PWID in GGC, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Why cocaine matters...

• Increases polydrug toxicity

• Known to be associated with:
  – Increased frequency of injecting
  – Increased risk of n/s sharing
  – Increased risk of n/s re-use
  – Increased libido

• Impacts treatment outcomes

*Hudgins et al. 1995; Joe et al. 1995; Tyndall et al. 2003; Cavazos-Rehg et al. 2009; Sullivan et al. 2010*
Cocaine-related deaths, Scotland, 1996-2017

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)
Why cocaine matters...

Cocaine-related deaths, Scotland, 1996-2017

Prevalence of cocaine injecting, Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS) / Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Injecting drug use....

- NPS
Drugs injected in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
NPS injecting in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2016

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
NPS injecting in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2016

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative (NESI)
Why NPS mattered...

• Increases polydrug toxicity

• Known to be associated with:
  – Increased frequency of injecting
  – Increased risk of n/s sharing
  – Increased risk of n/s re-use

• Increased burden on health/social/CJ system

Lafferty et al, 2016; Yeung et al, 2017; Pettie et al, 2018
Assessing the impact of a temporary class drug order on ethylphenidate-related infections among people who inject drugs in Lothian, Scotland: an interrupted time-series analysis

Alan Yeung, Amanda Weir, Hannah Austin, Kirsty Morrison, Donald Inverarity, Jim Shervat, Naomi Henderson, Shruti Joshi, Roisin Ure & Andrew McAuley

Blood-borne Viruses and Sexually Transmitted Infections Section, Health Protection Scotland, Glasgow, UK. School of Health and Life Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, UK. Department of Public Health, NHS Lothian, Edinburgh, UK. Department of Microbiology, NHS Lothian, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK and Scottish Hemophilus Legionella Meningococcus Pneumococcus Reference Laboratory, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow, Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, UK.

The experience of an increase in the injection of ethylphenidate in Lothian April 2014–March 2015

Con Lafferty, Linda Smith, Alison Coull & Jim Shanley

New drug controls and reduced hospital presentations due to novel psychoactive substances in Edinburgh

Correspondence Michael Eddleston, PITT, QMRI E3.2.2a, 47 Little France Crescent, Edinburgh EH16 4TJ, UK. E-mail: m.eddleston@ed.ac.uk

Received 29 December 2017; Revised 1 June 2018; Accepted 8 June 2018

Janice Pettie, Allan Burt, Duleeka W. Knipe, Hazel Torrance, Margaret Dow, Karen Osinski, Robert Gregi, Diletta Sabatini, Kate Easterford, James Dear and Michael Eddleston
NPS injecting in the last six months among PWID in Scotland, 2008-2018
‘Street’ / ‘Designer’ benzodiazepines....
Trends in prescribing of Benzodiazepines in Scotland, 2006-2017

Source: NHS National Services Scotland
Benzodiazepine-related deaths, Scotland, 2008-2017

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)
Benzodiazepine-related deaths, Scotland, 2008-2017

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)
Benzodiazepine-related deaths by substance, Scotland, 2008-2017

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)
Benzodiazepine-related deaths by substance, Scotland, 2008-2017

Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)
Why ‘street benzo’s matter...

• Increases polydrug toxicity → Increased risk of overdose

• When compared traditional Benzo’s...
  – Much stronger
  – Different half-life → Increased risk of overdose

• False advertising → “Consumption roulette”
“The ACMD is concerned with Police Scotland’s report that a number of benzodiazepines are being sold as ‘street valium’. When analysed, tablets with the appearance of diazepam tablets were found to contain diclazepam, diazepam, a mixture of etizolam and the synthetic opiate U-47,700 or U-47,700 on its own.”

ACMD letter to Home Office recommending control of Etizolam and other designer benzodiazepines, 2 Dec 2016
Timeline of reporting of new benzodiazepines to EMCDDA

2007
- Phenazepam

2011
- Etizolam

2012
- Pyrazolam

2013
- Flubromazepam
- Diclazepam

2014
- Alprazolam
  - triazolobenzophene derivative
- Meclonazepam
- Deschlorozetizolam
- Flubromazolam

2015
- Nifoxipam
- Clonazolam/Clonitrazolam
- Adinazolam
- Metizolam
- Nitrazolam

2016
- Norfludiazepam
- Ro 07-4065
- Thionordiazepam
- Cloniprazepam
- 3-hydroxyphenazepam
- Fonazepam
- 4-chlorodiazepam
- Flunitrazolam
- Bromazolam

Source: EMCDDA
Anticonvulsant drugs...
Trends in prescribing of, and deaths involving, anticonvulsant drugs in Scotland, 2006-2017

Dispensed items

Deaths

Source: NHS National Services Scotland
To ban or not to ban...

ACMD
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

Chair: Professor Prof Les Iversen
Secretary: Zahi Sulaiman
1st Floor Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Tel: 020 7035 1121
Email: ACMD@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Karen Bradley MP
Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

14 January 2016

Re: Pregabalin and Gabapentin advice

Home Office

A consultation on proposals to schedule pregabalin and gabapentin under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001

Government consultation
Future trends...
“Trying to predict the future is a mug’s game. But increasingly it’s a game we all have to play because the world is changing so fast and we need to have some sort of idea of what the future’s actually going to be like because we are going to have to live there, probably next week.”

— Douglas Adams, The Salmon of Doubt
Is it time to reinvent the wheel?
Summary

• In Scotland, opioids are *still* the main drugs of concern, but...
  – Drug use is changing!

• Changing drug trends are *compromising* harm reduction efforts

• Policy and practice responses require *flexibility and innovation*
“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

Einstein
Thank you for listening

andrew.mcauley@nhs.net

@arjmcauley