

## FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A FURTHER DATA COLLECTION SWEEP FOR THE DRUG OUTCOMES RESEARCH IN SCOTLAND (DORIS) STUDY

### Researchers

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### Aim

1. To establish the contactability of a sub-sample of the interviewees in DORIS study (a repeat interview study of 1033 Scottish drug users entering treatment) six years on.
2. To collect data from the contacted sub-sample on current self-reported health to ascertain post-treatment trends in the physical and mental health of drug users.

### Project Outline/Methodology

A random sub-sample of 100 DORIS interviewees was drawn from the original study sample, after known deaths had been excluded. Ethical permission for follow-up already existed. Attempts were made to re-contact the sub-sample using interviewees' contact details from previous DORIS interviews. Re-contacted interviewees were interviewed (by telephone or face-to-face) on their self-reported health, using a standard survey instrument, the SF-36.

### Key Results

Despite the prior exclusion of known deaths, a further four of the 100 in the sub-sample were found to have died. Of the remainder, 47% were successfully re-contacted (after six years). This compares favourably with follow-up rates in similar studies.

Those re-contacted had poorer self-reported health than a UK general population sample across all eight dimensions of the SF-36 survey instrument – physical functioning, social functioning, role limitation due to physical problems, role limitation due to emotional problems, mental health, energy and vitality, pain and general health perception. Compared to self-reported health six years previously (at the start of an episode of drug treatment), the sub-sample reported significantly better health in respect of their mental health and their social functioning.

### Conclusions

There is a continuing need for a strong evidence base on the effectiveness of treatments for drug

misuse and impacts on criminality, employment-status, housing status and health status. The high contactability of the DORIS sample six years on from original sample recruitment, suggests that it would be feasible to extend the life of the DORIS study to incorporate another data collection sweep.

### What does this study add to the field?

The evidence on interviewees' poor self-reported health confirms earlier findings that ex-drug users may have limited employment prospects

### Implications for Practice or Policy

The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of drug policy. Follow-up studies of drug users in treatment, like the DORIS study, have become the standard method to generate information on the effectiveness of different drug treatments. This feasibility study indicates that it may be possible to extend the life of the DORIS study to continue to provide new findings on the treatment effectiveness, criminality, health, housing and employment of Scottish drug users.

### Where to next?

The researchers will prepare an application for funding to extend the life of the DORIS study.

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