

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUBSTITUTION MAINTENANCE THERAPY PROGRAM IN UKRAINE

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Substitution maintenance therapy (SMT) is a drug treatment program for people with mental and behavioral disorders due to opioid use. Methadone and buprenorphine are used during treatment. The SMT program has scientifically proven effectiveness and is recognized in European countries as a cost-effective way to treat drug addiction. This means that it is cheaper for the state to treat a person with drug addiction than to spend more resources to eliminate the consequences of such addiction: the spread of HIV, viral hepatitis, deteriorating health, detaining people who have committed offenses to get money to buy drugs.

SMT is the treatment of a chronic disease. Some patients in the program may need therapy for many years, some for life. The SMT program is designed for people who suffer from opioids and are diagnosed with "mental and behavioral disorders due to opioid use".

The SMT program has been implemented in Ukraine since 2004, and since 2017 it has been transferred to full state funding. In recent years, there has been a significant expansion of the SMT program. Thus, in 2014 the number of patients was 8,407 people, in 2015 - 8,512 people, in 2016 - 9,214 people, in 2017 – 10,189 people, in 2018 - 11,385 people.

The average increase in SMT patients is 935 people per year. The largest expansion of the program took place in 2010 - 2876 people, the next major expansion took place in 2018 - 1200 people. According to statistics, in 2018 there is a high rate of recruitment of new SMT program participants. As of January 1, 2019, the growth rate was 1196 people in Ukraine, which is significantly higher than in previous years.

The expansion of the program depending on the region was uneven. Thus, Dnipro region has a high growth rate (+249 people). Regions that had a low or no enrollment of new patients in the SMT program: Rivne (+9 people), Kyiv (+1 people), Khmelnytsky (0 people). Regions that had a negative indicator of program expansion: Zhytomyr (-11 persons), Ternopil (-4 persons), Chernivtsi (-1 person).

As of June 1, 2020 according to the Behavioral Survey, 317,000 people in Ukraine use injecting drugs, of which 278,318 are opioid and mixed drug users, where the opioid group is the main one.

The SMT program covers 13,097 people, including 10,911 men and 2,262 women. In 2018, 55 women who are SMT patients completed their pregnancies.

The gender distribution of SMT program participants has remained virtually unchanged in recent years, with the vast majority of men. This gender distribution is broadly in line with the general trend in opioid prevalence in Ukraine.

Of the 5098 HIV-positive patients with SMT, 4749 (93.1%) received antiretroviral therapy. According to available data, the SMT program covers 27.4% of people in dispensary accounting or 3.8% of the estimated number of opioid users.