

SO-PREP

How can EU countries be prepared and equipped for a continued rise in Synthetic Opioids (SO) prevalence, use and incidents?

The project SO-PREP is funded by the European Union and aims to:

1. Gain a better understanding of the current prevalence and trends of SO use and related health harms in Europe,
2. Strengthen national health systems' preparedness with regard to SO, and
3. Develop an evidence-based toolkit for implementing key responses for SO monitoring and response capacity.

What are Synthetic Opioids?

Synthetic Opioids (SO) are substances with analgesic effects that are typically many times more potent than that of heroin or morphine. Examples of SO are fentanyl, fentanyl-analogues, and other new synthetic opioids such as U-47700, as well as diverted prescription opioids, such as oxycodone. Some SO are used in the

medical setting for the treatment of severe pain or for palliative care, while other novel SO are produced illegally to circumvent existing drug laws.

Why SO-PREP?

Over the last decade, global drug markets have been experiencing two main developments: the rapid emergence of new psychoactive substances (NPS) and the increasing role of the Internet as a platform for buying drugs. This has contributed to an increased availability of SO on drug markets, both in pure form and as an adulterant in other substances including counterfeit medicines. Moreover, the potency of synthetic opioids is such that small quantities can easily be shipped, making them a profitable commodity in the illicit drug trade. As the number of SO related overdoses and overdose deaths are growing across Europe, SO are gradually becoming a major public health threat. This raises the question of how European countries can be prepared and equipped to respond to the increasing prevalence and incidents of SO, in order to protect people from the risks and harms of SO.

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How will SO-PREP address this issue?

The project includes a wide range of activities. The current prevalence and trends of SO use and harms in Europe will be assessed; lessons learned will be drawn from North America and Estonia, as they have been experiencing opioid crises in the past decade; and national health systems preparedness strategies will be analyzed, ranging from generic to SO-specific strategies.

Finally, a toolkit will be developed with clear and concise guidelines for implementing key responses to SO. These key responses include Early Warning instruments, online monitoring, drug checking, pharmacologically assisted interventions of opioid dependence, drug consumption rooms, naloxone programs, and e-Health tools.

Outputs

Publications will be launched through the course of the project 2020 – 2021 on our website

www.so-prep-project.eu

Partners

Trimbos Institute

(TI, The Netherlands)

Frankfurt University of Applied Science

(FRA-UAS, Germany)

The National Institute for Health and Wellbeing

(THL, Finland)

The National Institute for Health Development

(TAI, Estonia)

University Ghent

(Belgium)

Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network

For any questions, you can reach us via the 'Contact' button on our project website.

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