

The (Eastern funded DRug deaths, Overdose and Suicide) EDROS Project

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This eighteen month pilot study aims to investigate the factors which are involved in drug-related death (DRD), suicide and overdose (OD) and to consider the overlap of these factors amongst individuals within this population in the central Fife region of Scotland. This study is a collaborative venture between CARES (University of Dundee), St. Andrews University, Fife Constabulary and NHS Fife and is based within Fife Constabulary HQ.

A novelty of this work is the inclusion of all three of these hard to reach population groups (DRD, OD and suicide) within the same study. Whilst a number of studies have considered the factors that contribute to DRD, OD and suicide, to our knowledge, it has not previously been investigated as to whether these factors are common to the three populations and whether these individuals could in fact be considered as a spectrum of the same population.

This study will assist in the identification of trends and risk factors common to these individuals, who all experience adverse clinical outcome, and as a result will assist with the identification of individuals who are at risk of similar outcomes in the future. The provision of information regarding risk factors could be used in order to improve prevention programs delivered by key organisations, including the Police, Health and Voluntary Services and is of utmost importance in today's society as attempted suicide, self-harm and suicide rates in Scotland as well as DRD rates continue to rise each year, despite the prevention measures currently in place.

The current study is divided into two main strands. The first of these aims to investigate the processes which contribute to DRD, suicide and OD through the use of a questionnaire methodology and the second will investigate those factors which contribute to OD through the use of a Life Grid interview. The first phase of the study has involved the analysis of clinical notes from around 60 OD, 100 suicide and 40 DRD cases between 2005 and 2007, which has allowed the completion of a questionnaire designed to consider a large number of factors which may have contributed to the individual's death or overdose.

During the second phase of the study, 15 individuals in Fife who have overdosed between 2005 and 2007 have been invited to take part in a Life Course Grid interview. The Life Course Method forms the main theoretical framework of this phase of the study. The Life Course Method allows the consideration of the effect of both physical and social factors to which an individual has been exposed during different life periods and poses retrospective questions to investigate the impact of these events and experiences. Details reported during the interview will be verified through the analysis of clinical and criminal

records. A secondary objective of the current study is to investigate whether the Life Course Model can provide a suitable method for gathering information relating to individuals who have experienced an OD.

The results, coming from both the questionnaire and Life Course Grid are currently being analysed and will be published in the near future. It is planned that this work will be developed into a longer-term project, looking at this population group in a wider geographical location with the aim being that the results can be used in order to shape future preventative measures and to start reducing this (currently) ever-growing population.