

GENERAL PRACTICE PATIENTS STARTING TREATMENT FOR SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS

Observations from two data sources across levels of care

Background

The surveillance of new treatment episodes of substance use problems in BE is carried out by 2 programmes in Sciensano:

- Surveillance by the Belgian Network of Sentinel General Practices (SGP) in general practice
- Treatment Demand Indicator (TDI) surveillance at specialist care levels

Study assumption:

patients starting GP treatment (SGP) \approx patients referred by GP to specialist care (TDI)

Study rationale:

examine & compare data from general practice patients in SGP & TDI, BE 2016-2017

Research questions

- 1) How do GP-referred patients starting specialist treatment for substance use problems compare to similar patients referred by non-GP caregivers? TDI data
- 2) How do patients starting GP treatment for substance use problems without receiving specialist treatment concurrently compare to those who do? SGP data

Methods

Data sources

TDI: (incomplete) register of new treatment episodes reported by a large range of specialist care services

SGP: new treatment episodes reported by a representative sample of general practices

Variables

Common core of variables defined by European protocol (EMCDDA)

SGP: less variables (~~education, accommodation~~), less details of substance use type

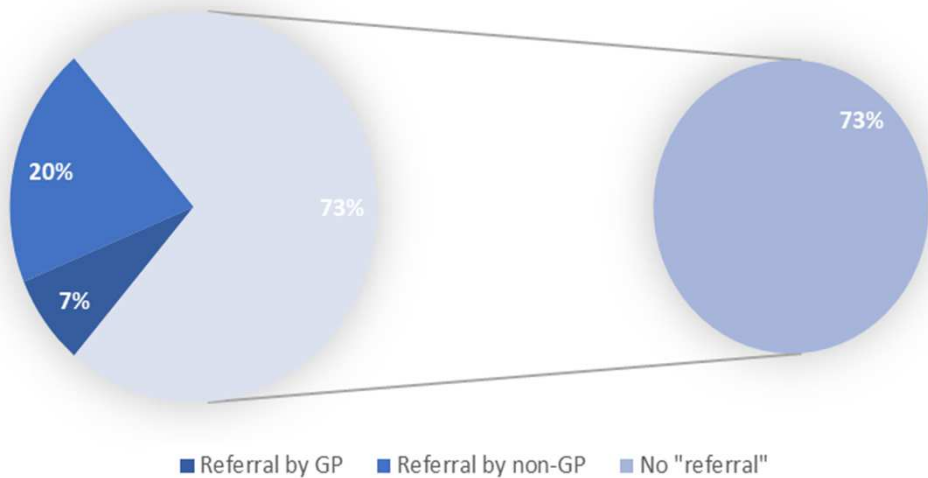
Our classification of type of substance use :

Alcohol only (I) Prescription drugs: hypnotics and sedatives (and alcohol) (II)

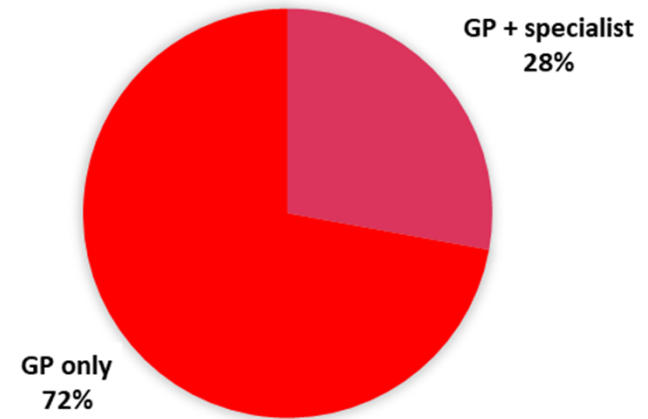
Cannabis is only or primary substance (III) Illicit drugs (IV)

Results: study data

TDI (n= 16,576 of N=60,310)



SGP (N=314)



Question 1) Determinants of referral by GP vs non-GP caregiver (TDI, n=16,576)

	OR(95%CI)
Age ≥ median	1.24 (1.11-1.37)
Education ≥ secondary	1.26 (1.14-1.40)
Employed	1.71 (1.55-1.87)
Stable accommodation	3.62 (3.08-4.26)
First treatment episode ever	1.72 (1.57-1.87)
Type of substance use (ref: Illicit drugs (IV))	
Alcohol only (I)	1.12 (0.96-1.31)
Prescription drugs (II)	1.24 (1.04-1.49)
Cannabis only/primary (III)	0.73 (0.62-0.86)
Mono substance use	1.23 (1.07-1.41)
Daily use primary/only substance in last 4 weeks	1.46 (1.34-1.60)

Question 2) Determinants of new episode of GP treatment only vs GP treatment & concurrent specialist treatment (SGP, N=314)

	OR(95%CI)
Employed	2.58 (1.36-4.91)
First treatment episode	2.78 (1.37-5.61)
Walloon/Brussels region (vs Flanders)	1.97 (1.06-3.68)

Main findings

- 1) TDI: **GP-referred patients** starting specialist treatment for substance use problems have a distinct, more favourable profile compared to patients referred by non-GP caregivers, in a social sense and regarding their substance use
- 2) SGP: **patients starting GP treatment only** were equally better off compared to similar patients receiving specialist treatment concurrently, in a social sense and regarding their substance use

Conclusion

What this study adds...

- Agreement between both sources \approx good quality of data
- New knowledge about general practice population (not revealed by SGP)
- New information for policy & research:
GPs are meeting treatment demand of a substantial and specific population, relatively better off, possibly/partly not covered by TDI

Discussion

- Strengths & weaknesses, unanswered questions, further research needed, ...
- Your questions?

Contact

nicole.boffin@sciensano.be

Sciensano • Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14 • 1050 Brussels • Belgium
T +32 2 642 51 11 • T Press +32 2 642 54 20 • info@sciensano.be • www.sciensano.be