

INCREASE IN COCAINE - RELATED DEATHS IN SLOVENIA

Mateja Jandl, Milan Krek, Katja Rostohar
National Institute of Public Health Slovenia
mateja.jandl@nijz.si

Aim/introduction

In 2016, 18 cocaine related deaths were reported in Slovenia. This sudden increase was further analyzed, since by that time 3-5 cocaine related deaths were reported per year. Study aims to provide data for understanding this new trend and results will serve to create responds to prevent those deaths in the future.

Methodology

We used a trendspotter study methodology which is particularly useful for investigating new drug trends and emerging drug-related phenomena. Data from General Mortality Register with forensic autopsies and toxicological analysis were overviewed and analysed. For further analysis we linked data from General Mortality Register with the data from the treatment database (Drug Users Register) for the history of treatment. Data from Early Warning System and national Police service were used.

Results

All 18 cocaine deaths in 2016 were men with average age 38.9 years. The highest number of deaths occurred in the 30-34 age group, with 75% of all cocaine deaths aged between 30 and 45 years. The increase in deaths can not be related to codification issues.

According to the season, three persons died in February and three in March 2016, the rest is arranged to other months. Deaths in time periods can not be linked with seizures of cocaine with certainty. Total weight of seized cocaine in kg on the Slovenian market in 2016 increased in comparison with previous years and the average concentration of cocaine increased.

Totally 11 deaths were recorded in Western Slovenia and 7 in Eastern Slovenia and all deaths were overdoses, none was coded as intentional poisoning. 14 males were single and only seven were employed. In a third death occurred at home, only 8 people received medical care.

An autopsy was performed in 17 people and toxicological reports showed that 6 people died only due to cocaine poisoning, 5 people were toxicologically proven to have the presence of one additional drug or alcohol and in other 7 persons presence of two or more additional drugs or alcohol were recorded.

Linkage with Drug Users Register shows that six people (33%) were included in the treatment programs from 2013 to 2016, of which three persons indicated that heroin was their main drug, two reported cocaine and one reported benzodiazepine. Cocaine was most commonly cited as an additional drug. Four people were treated in other medical institutions and 8 people did not seek any medical help in the last 3 years.

Conclusions

Among cocaine related deaths in 2016 in Slovenia all victims were males in their late 30s having used cocaine with benzodiazepines (found in 7 deaths) or with opiates (in five deaths). Followed are combinations with amphetamines, alcohol and cannabis.

No detailed data on cocaine related deaths was available in Slovenia until now. With analysis of data with trendspotter study from 2016, we got an important inside on this problem and the basis for setting trends regarding cocaine deaths in Slovenia.

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the study.