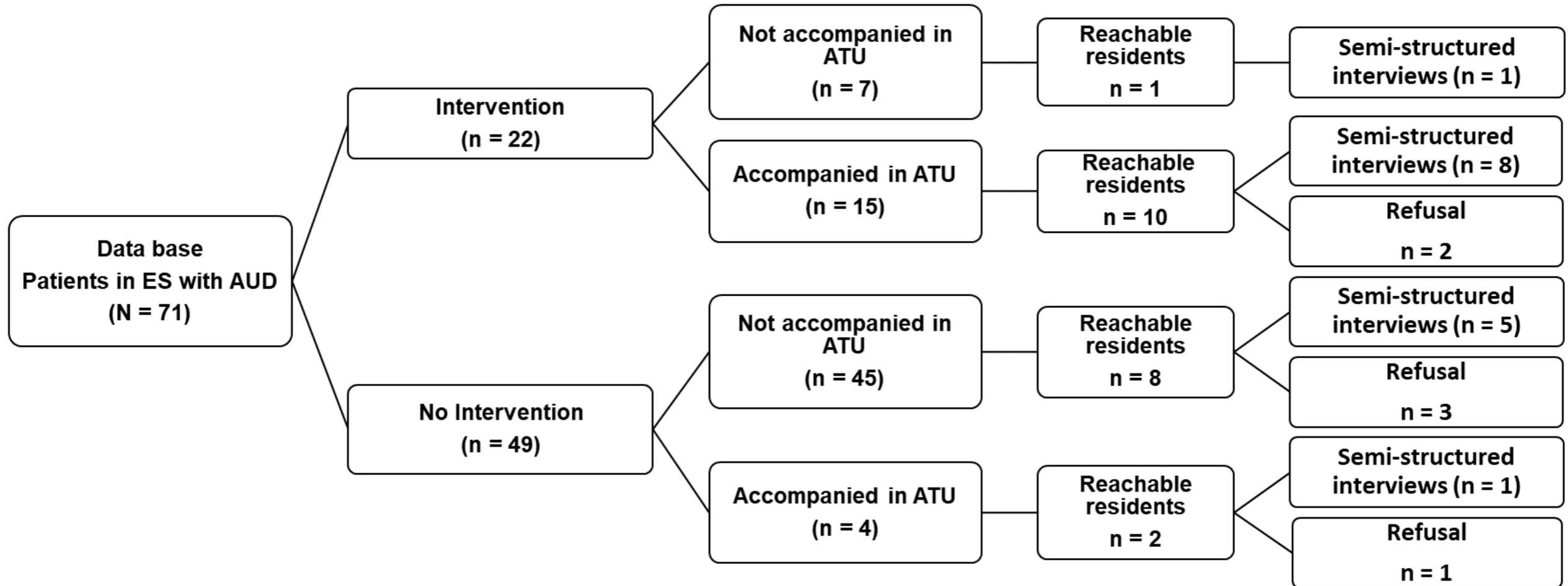


The experience of persons in homeless situation with alcohol related problems regarding a pharmacological harm reduction initiative (PLACE)

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Study design



9 women & 60 men

Age: min = 27y max = 67y

Median = 46y (9.68 standard deviation)

**Reachable = accessible by telephone
ATU = Alcohol Treatment Unit**

5 Protocol Questions

- 1) How were alcohol related problems in PEP in ES characterized during that period?
- 2) What was the intervention range?
- 3) How was the participation characterized?
- 4) How was the intervention implementation characterized?
- 5) What was the impact of the intervention?

15 Semi-structured interviews

1. Homelessness experience
2. Experience in emergency shelters
3. Pharmacological intervention:
Context of the proposal
How it was defined
How it was evaluated
Effects and benefits (regarding alcohol use and emergency shelters)
4. Life in 2020, limitations and changes, life goals



Qualitative analysis

Software MAXQDA (3 investigators) according to CFIRC

4 Main Themes

- 1. Substance use and Emergency Shelters (ES)**
- 2. Pharmacological Intervention (PI) promoting factors**
- 3. Barriers to PI**
- 4. PI perceived Advantages**



Substance use and ES

Regarding **substance use and Emergency Shelters (ES)**

- During the pandemic, despite adversities, some of the people interviewed maintained or even increased their use of alcohol
- Others reduced because they couldn't buy alcohol due to lack of money or places to buy
- However, alcohol was still considered cheap and mainly accessible in supermarkets
- While staying at Emergency shelters most people continued using alcohol, specially outside ES facilities

Substance use and ES

“I never had trouble buying alcohol... supermarkets were never totally closed... in the shelters we would come outside and drink in the garden. Some would drink inside”



PI promoting factors

As **pharmacological intervention promoting factors**, the interviewed individuals stated:

- Importance of housing, the feeling of belonging
- Not being lost on the streets
- Desire of having a job and a family
- Wishing for a better life

PI promoting factors

“[housing first] took me out of the streets... having a house... a place to live... now I don't have to walk the streets and feel lost”

“I felt I wanted to pursue another path, have a job, a wife and stop drinking (...) it was possible through housing”



Barriers to PI

As to **barriers against the implementation** of our pharmacological intervention:

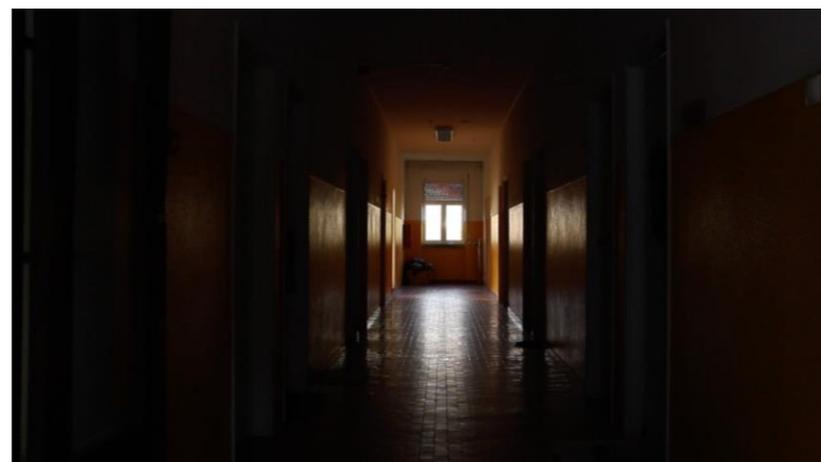
- **Most considered that the risks outweighed the benefits of adhering to our PI**
- **Considered the risk of side effects too significant**
- **Underrecognized the eventual benefits**
- **Worried about negative interaction between medication and alcohol**
- **Some simply don't like taking medication**
- **Some had bad experiences with medication in the past**

Barriers to PI

“Sometimes we think medication is too [strong] because it has impact on the stomach”

“Diazepam and alcohol... wow..

I said I didn't want anymore, it was too much”



PI Perceived advantages

- As **PI perceived advantages**, interviewed individuals considered it would help in the following aspects:
 - 1) Reducing cravings
 - 2) Preventing abstinence syndrome
 - 3) Reducing alcohol use
 - 4) Increasing chances of succeeding with stopping alcohol use
 - 5) Reducing risk of relapse

PI Perceived advantages

“[Medication] takes the urge to drink. Start liking more of ourselves, increase self-esteem, think of a future. When we drink we only think day by day”

“During the first week [at the emergency shelter] I felt cold, hot flashes, tremor, it helped thinking differently, not to leave. I always feel craving, but it’s willpower, it helped to succeed.



Take-home messages

[Interviewed individuals considered...]

- **That the pandemic had impact on their alcohol use but it was still mainly accessible.**
- **As PI promoting factors: the desire of having a house, a job, a family, a better life.**
- **As barriers: they expressed worry about risks of medication and negative interaction w/ alcohol.**
- **As advantages: medication may reduce craving, prevent abstinence and relapse and increase chances of successful treatment and having a better future.**

Thank you

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