

AGEING WITH ADDICTION: DESCRIBING HEALTH CONDITIONS OF YOUNGER AND OLDER DRUG USERS IN SWITZERLAND

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Background. The project GOLD (Growing OLd with Drugs) analyzes the ageing process of substance users on substitution therapy, by combining qualitative and quantitative research approaches with the aim to gain insight into age-specific problems and needs of this population. In collaboration with SAMMSU (Swiss Association for the Medical Management in Substance Users), a comparative analysis of cohort data was performed assessing medical characteristics of younger (<50 years) and older (>50 years) drug users.

Methods: The SAMMSU cohort study collects data on drug users in substitution therapy in Switzerland, enrolled in different centers across the country (Aarau, Basel, Bern, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, St Gallen and Zurich). A comparative analysis of demographic characteristics and medical characteristics was performed, stratifying subjects in two groups according to age: ≤ 50 and >50 years old.

Results. Until September 2018, 764 subjects were included, 494 (65%) ≤ 50 years and 270 >50 years. Mortality rate was comparable across the two groups (3% among >50 vs 2%, $P=0.4135$). Gender distribution was similar in both age groups (75% males). Similar proportions started drug use at an age <18 years in both groups (35% ≤ 50 years vs 31% >50 years, $P=0.491$). Significant differences were observed for psychiatric conditions: in younger drug users the frequency of affective disorders was lower (24% vs 36%, $P=0.0004$), while the rate of suicide attempts was higher (18% vs 12%, $P=0.0256$), according to clinical records and patients' reports; marginal difference was observed for diagnosis of schizophrenia (14% in those >50 years vs 20% ≤ 50 years, $P=0.0540$). Further analyses are ongoing and more detailed information will be presented in the definite presentation.

Conclusions. Age-specific changes of medical conditions including psychiatric disorders can be found in drug users. Identification of age-related differences will help to develop tailored treatment and prevention strategies addressing age-specific needs in drug users.

Disclosure of Interest: none