



# HARM REDUCTION

## NEWSLETTER N°5 - JUNE 2014



Demonstration against the exorbitant cost of treatment during the 49th EASL Conference 2014

### Latest news on the cross-wise programme: Hepatitis C advocacy action

#### 2014 World CAB, Bangkok

The first international meeting of the community consultation group on hepatitis C (World Cab - World Community Advisory Group) was held from 22 to 25 February this year in Bangkok, Thailand. Following on from previous World CAB meetings successfully organised on the topic of HIV, this first meeting brought together 38 activists from 22 countries to define a joint strategy and ways of making access to treatments for the hepatitis C Virus (HCV) more affordable in countries with limited resources.



First HCV World CAB 2014, Bangkok.

The activists subsequently met with various pharmaceutical laboratories (both brand and generic), such as Roche, Merck, Gilead, BMS, AbbVie etc. Unfortunately, these meetings did not

prove fruitful to the extent that all the brand-name laboratories refused to commit to cost reductions which would enable more effective access to these drugs in low-income countries where 85% of people suffering from HCV live.

*Read the press release published on [hepCoalition.org](#)*

#### New hepatitis C treatments: Strategies to secure universal access

A study was conducted into new hepatitis C treatments and the strategies required to guarantee universal access. It was published in mid March and is available on the [hepCoalition](#) website. It was also reported in exclusives in *Le Monde* (FR) and *The Guardian* (UK) newspapers.

The study analyses epidemiology data concerning HCV and the strategies of pharmaceutical companies. It shows their impact on access to direct-acting antivirals (DAA) and the impasse in which middle-income countries could potentially find themselves. Adopting the strategies used in the fight against HIV/AIDS,

Médecins du Monde is recommending competition

be generated between brand and generic drugs by using statutory licences and opposing patents. The new HCV treatments could be produced in generic form for a fraction of the cost.

*To find out more:*

- *Read the full study.*
- *Paul Benkimoun, Inégalités face à l'hépatite C, [le Monde](#), 17 mars 2014.*
- *Sara Boseley, New hepatitis C drugs must be affordable worldwide, say campaigners, [The Guardian](#), 17 march 2014.*

#### New Treatments for Hepatitis C Virus:



**Strategies for Achieving Universal Access**

Study cover



First meeting of WHO global partners on viral hepatitis, Geneva

At this event held on 27 and 28 March, Médecins du Monde participated in the panel examining “the opportunities and challenges for increasing control and lessening the impact of viral hepatitis”. The results of the survey carried out in Georgia on people using drugs were presented at the meeting in order to obtain priority treatment on HCV programmes for these individuals in low-income countries.

Our organisation actively participated in drafting the call to action launched at the end of the two days and is due to be part of a civil society advisory group, currently being set up, which will be responsible for advising the WHO. It is worth noting, too, the impact on the organising of this first meeting and the recent work by the WHO in the fight against hepatitis C of the “Missing” campaign, launched in July 2013.

49th EASL Conference, London

The 49th International Liver Congress took place from 9 to 13 April. During a press conference, the study on universal access to hepatitis treatments was presented in the presence of Paata Sabelashvili from the Georgian harm reduction network and Michel Kazatchkine, special envoy of the Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. With the collaboration of the Treatment Action Group (TAG) and the International Network of People Using Drugs (INPUD), a demonstration was organised in the main hall to condemn the lack of affordable treatment in low and middle-income countries. The activists were protesting against the exorbitant prices fixed by Gilead for Sofosbuvir, the new recently approved direct-acting antiviral which is on sale for 84,000 dollars in the USA.

*Read the article, “International Liver Conference: activists demand affordable hepatitis C treatment”, on [hepCoalition.org](#)*

First WHO guidelines on hepatitis C treatment

Long-awaited by medical NGOs, the WHO's first guidelines on the screening, care and treatment of persons with hepatitis C were presented at the 49th Congress of the European Association for the Study of the Liver in London. Aimed at all governmental and non-governmental organisations in low and middle-income countries, they put forward a framework for action aimed at developing the programme to combat hepatitis C. 185 million people are infected by the hepatitis C virus and most of them are unaware of their serology. A lack of testing, controlling and monitoring is a crucial factor in the fight against HCV. For countries with limited resources, the publication of WHO guidelines therefore marks an important step together with the emergence of direct-acting antivirals capable of treating 90 % of individuals.

*Read the WHO's guidelines for hepatitis C.*

17<sup>e</sup> conférence ICASA, à Le Cap

The 17th International Conference on HIV and AIDS in Africa (ICASA) took place from 7 to 11 December 2013. The HIV/AIDS epidemic among at-risk populations and notably people using drugs is an issue rarely tackled in Africa and virtually absent from the scientific programmes of previous ICASA conferences. Médecins du Monde (MdM) took part in organising several sessions on Harm Reduction (HR) and on the so-called “key populations”, including a satellite session on the eve of the conference entitled “High-level panel on HIV, drug policy and public health in Africa”, in the

*course of which Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, and other policy leaders spoke. Other notable contributions included an oral presentation by the Tanzanian self-support group TanPUD (Tanzanian Network of People Using Drugs), supported by MdM during the satellite session “Are key populations forgotten in the Aids response in Africa? Catalysing responses for 2015 and beyond”, calling for people who use drugs to be involved in the response to the epidemic. In collaboration with IDPC, MdM organised a satellite session entitled “Support. Don't punish: the need for better responses to drug use in Africa ». The aim was to demonstrate,*

*through positive experiences in Africa, that drug use should no longer be criminalised but viewed in terms of human rights. The example of Tanzania has been developed in the form of a three-stage presentation: MdM implementation of the project, the introduction of substitution therapies in the country (Ministry of Health) and the creation of the network of people using drugs (TanPUD).*

France: New tool for reducing the risks of fatal overdoses, Narcan (Naloxone)

Last February, the Law, Sex and Drugs (LSD) working group met to hear a presentation by Jean Pierre Lhomme on overdoses and Naloxone in France. Despite official data on fatal overdoses underestimating the totals involved, these figures have shown a continuous rise since 2003. The protocol for using Naloxone (dispensed solely by a doctor) and the method of administering the drug (by injection) constitute an inadequate response which, in the event of an overdose, needs to be rapid and thus immediately accessible.

Mainly used in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and on certain MdM programmes (in Afghanistan and Georgia), the drug has been the subject of numerous studies into its use, notably

by intramuscular, subcutaneous and nasal routes. These different methods for administering the drug provide an easy, rapid and readily accessible response, without involving any side effects.

Promoting a new tool for reducing the risks of a fatal overdose (Narcan Naloxone) was identified as one of the recommendations to come out of the HR France seminar (23 and 24 November 2013). This advocacy work relating to the quality of practices will follow the timetable set out below:

- April 2014 – Working group set up
- April-August 2014 – Drawing up the pilot project
- May-June 2014 – National health strategy
- September 2014 – Launch of pilot project at multiple locations.

Vietnam: Survey of people who use drugs

From November 2012 to January 2013, as part of a survey aimed at understanding drug consumption methods, practices and needs, group interviews were carried out with 103 people using drugs (PUD), including 88 who were actively using drugs, 15 former drug users and 16 peer workers.

*Read the survey.*

	Ingested	Inhaled	Taken	Injected
Heroin	-	38,6 %	-	92 %
Crystal Methamphetamine	-	51,1 %	-	-
Ectasy, MDMA	25 %	-	-	-
Ketamine	-	-	12,5 %	-
Cannabis	-	12,5 %	-	-
Methadone	8 %	-	-	-

Consumption methods and drug types.

Georgia: Ongoing advocacy work on drug use

The recently elected government in Georgia had called for a relaxation of the law concerning drug use, but, under pressure from the Ministry of the Interior, the parliament did not pass the new proposed law in September 2013. Advocacy work therefore resumed to decriminalise drug use and to secure access to treatment for hepatitis C.

On 24 November, a protest was organised outside the Ministry of the Interior to demand a relaxation of the law and to oppose the current practice of street testing (using plastic tumblers and a container outside the ministry to symbolise these urine tests). MdM supported the action organised outside the Ministry of Health on 18 March 2014. A hundred activists from western and eastern regions of Georgia, as well as from Tbilisi, gathered in front of the ministry buildings to demand treatment for hepatitis C.



Protest in front of the Georgian Interior Ministry, 24 November 2013.



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Using Naloxone in Georgia

The number of overdoses in Georgia has continued to rise for about 3 consecutive years following the appearance of the homemade drug “Krokodil”, manufactured from codeine. Pharmacies restarted importing Naloxone and Médecins du Monde decided to add it to the list of materials distributed to New Vector in the absence of support from the Global Fund. As a result of tough prosecution for drug use, people who use drugs do not call on the emergency services in the event of an overdose; the emergency services do in fact alert the police in cases where someone's

life is in danger. Working with the Open Society Foundations (OSF), we are continuing to support New Vector in setting up workshops and training on overdoses and the use of Naloxone (administered intramuscularly). It is available at the Drop-in Centre and is distributed during outreach visits, along with the necessary instructions provided by peer workers.

Ivory Coast: Progress with Abidjan survey

To assess the needs of people who use drugs (PUD) in Abidjan, Médecins du Monde organised a survey of their bio-behaviour. The first stage involved establishing relationships with the PUD communities and mapping the locations and types of consumption. A cross-wise survey of 450 people was then undertaken in May 2014. The PUDs, recruited by Respondent Driven Sampling, replied to a standard questionnaire on their practices and were then tested for HIV, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis and syphilis. All the work was carried out in close collaboration with Ivory Coast institutions. The results, which should be available in the autumn, are keenly awaited. They will enable an appropriate response to be formulated to the health problems encountered by PUDs in Abidjan.

Birmanie / Myanmar : promotion de pratiques sexuelles plus sûres au Pagoda festival !

Each year, the Pagoda Festival celebrates traditional Buddhist events associated with the history of pagodas. In recent years, it has become increasingly popular with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who, for a few days, can behave and dress freely without fear of discrimination and ridicule. Even “sexual” clothing can be worn more freely during the period of the festival in a region which at other times remains quite conservative. For example, it is not unusual for a single person to experiment with homosexual or transgender sex, whatever his or her sexual orientation.

It is against this background that MdM teams undertake regular health prevention activities at the Pagoda Festival, distributing free condoms and lubricants, promoting safer sexual practices and

distributing information on STIs and HIV services available at MdM's Drop-in Centre. For the first time this year, MdM had a stand at the popular Thanlyin Pagoda Festival which took place in February 2014. Visitors were offered free materials, brochures and condoms, and discussions around health took place in a friendly atmosphere and community spirit.



Photograph pinned to another at the Pagoda Festival.

## DRC and street children

### Kinshasa Street Children Fortnight

In November 2013, a fortnight devoted to street children in the city of Kinshasa was organised jointly by REEJER, Save the Children and MdM. The various opportunities afforded for exchanges – discussions, open doors, photo exhibitions, centre opening and symposium – enabled those involved in child protection to share approaches, good practice and harm reduction tools developed by their agencies.

An international symposium on the issue of “DRC street children: an approach based on health promotion and social protection” was organised as part of the Street Children Fortnight on 27, 28 and 29 November 2013. Attracting more than one hundred child protection stakeholders, the symposium was an occasion for discussing and sharing

views on the issues, challenges and outlook for those responsible for health prevention, protection and care for street children.

### SRH/HR workshop

On 5 and 6 March 2014, a SRH/HR workshop was organised by MdM aimed at REEJER educators and healthcare staff.

*Read the bulletin “Echos des structures membres” produced by REEJER.*

### Vaccination against hepatitis B

After considerable efforts and exchanges with the Ministry of Health, vaccinations against hepatitis B began on 13 March 2014, administered by healthcare staff, and on 18 and 19 March for

young girls being monitored by our partners. More than 40 people in total have now benefited from vaccination. This is carried out 2 days per week and so the total figure will increase week on week.



Poster advertising the symposium.

## Tanzania: Meeting with President Kikwete and latest on the TaNPUD network

### Meeting with Tanzanian president

Four years of advocacy aimed at the authorities are producing results and last December the MdM teams in Tanzania, the president of MdM France, Thierry Brigault, and the HR special adviser on the Board of Directors, Olivier Maguet, met with the President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete, to discuss the HR project and the situation for people who use drugs in the country.

The President actively supports the distribution of needles, so that every person who injects drugs has access to sterile needles and uses them. The discussions dealt with the waste management following our clean-up programme at drug-use

sites before the start of the needle-exchange programme. The squats and streets are now cleaner as a result. He also asked us about how to support the creation of methadone centres throughout the country. MdM could use its contacts in France, Europe and at the United Nations, and is ready to share its expertise to extend the HR programmes in Tanzania.

### MdM approaches the ORCHID project to develop the capacities of the TaNPUD network

Since its creation, the Tanzanian Network of People Using Drugs (TaNPUD) has greatly increased its network. MdM is one of the network's main

supporters in developing its skills and expertise. In 2004, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the ORCHID project<sup>1</sup> to reduce the risks for people who use drugs in the northeast Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland. Following key lessons learned on mobilising the community and the HR model developed, MdM is approaching the ORCHID project to help build the capacities of the TaNPUD self-support network.

1. Organized response for comprehensive HIV interventions in selected high-prevalence districts.

## Latest publications/Upcoming events

### Upcoming events

**26 June:** Support, don't punish! World Day in support of drug users.

**20 to 25 July:** 20th International Aids Conference, Melbourne.

**28 July:** World Hepatitis Day.

**13 to 15 October:** France's 5th National Symposium on HR: “Drugs, the dirty war”.

**23 to 24 October:** European Conference on Hepatitis C and Drug Use.

### Tanzania

*Sylvester Domasa, Tanzania leads in addressing HIV/AIDs issues in Africa, The Guardian, 28 January 2014.*

### Georgia

*Bouscaillou J., et al. Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs in Tbilisi, Georgia : An urgent need for prevention and treatment. International Journal of Drug Policy, 2014.*

### Publications internes

*Pauline Londeix and Chloé Forette, New Treatments for Hepatitis C Virus: Strategies for Achieving Universal Access, Médecins du Monde, march 2014.*

*Report on Naloxone meeting on 19/03/14, Overdoses : que faire ? – Paper given by Jean Pierre Lhomme to the LSD Group meeting on 01/02/14.*