

The use of Sterifilt[®], a sterile single use filter, in relation to the drug injected*

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Introduction.

A large number of complications are associated with the injection of psychoactive drugs: transmission of virus, abscesses, phlebitis, infections by fungi... In order to limit these complications, as well as vascular damage related to the injection of non-soluble particles, the NGO Apothicom created the Stérifilt[®], a single use filter.

For more than 5 years, the Sterifilt[®] is distributed by more than 200 syringe exchange programs (SEP) in France and the rest of the world. Feedback of these SEP suggests that the success of this filter depends on the drug that is injected; thus that there is a difference between heroin, cocaine and crushed tablets. From a public health point of view too, it might be important too to distinguish according to the drug used, because the intravenous use of different drugs, as well tablet fillers intended for oral use, can be associated to distinct complications (abscesses, pulmonary problems,...).

Objectives.

This study was designed to improve the knowledge concerning the current use of Sterifilt[®] by French drug users in relation to the drug they inject. The results will contribute to the improvement of harm reduction messages and practices, and might help us to prevent particular problems associated with the introduction of the Sterifilt[®] in SEPs.

Methods.

Two methods of data collection have been used in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative information: focus groups and questionnaires. More than 200 questionnaires have been collected throughout France and 3 focus groups or expert groups have taken place on the theme of filtration. The results of this study will be presented.

In parallel, and in co-operation with P. Roux and M-P Carrieri (Inserm UMR U912, a French public research institute), the Sterifilt[®] was tested in a laboratory setting in order to study its capacity to eliminate starch and talc particles from an injection solution.



*The use of Sterifilt[®], a sterile single use filter, in relation to the drug injected. L. Keijzer Abstract presentation in NCIDU, Glasgow, October 2009.