

## **Abstract**

The objective of this bachelor thesis is to map the patterns of substance abuse among clients of the outreach program No biohazard. The work aims to find out how and whether these patterns of use changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit the Czech Republic in early March 2020. Due to the global breadth of the pandemic, impacts and restrictions have affected almost all areas of human functioning. One of these areas was also the drug market. This study addresses how the restrictions associated with the pandemic affected the availability, price and quality of substances used among clients and whether during the pandemic the interest of outreach program clients in professional assistance such as treatment or counseling or substitution treatment increased. Research questions also ask about the availability of clean injection material and outreach programs during a pandemic. The study results serve as feedback on the functioning of the field program during the pandemic.

I collected data for the purposes of the bachelor's thesis in a questionnaire survey among clients of the outreach program from March to June 2021. For the purposes of the survey, I created a questionnaire containing 23 questions focusing on current patterns of substance use and drug market changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. I addressed the respondents during my outreach work. Together with the questionnaire I distributed Information to clients for the study participants, which contained information about the ongoing study and ensured anonymity for the clients. The study involved 50 respondents, 34 men and 16 women.

The results of the study showed that most clients of the outreach program during the pandemic experienced a deterioration in the availability of the substances used, as well as an increase in the price of these substances and a decrease in their quality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most respondents noted a deterioration in the availability, quality and price of methamphetamine. Despite these negative effects, most respondents did not reduce the consumption or frequency of substances used during a pandemic. Research shows that during a pandemic, 40% of respondents increased their interest in professional help such as treatment or counseling. There was an increase in buprenorphine users' interest in the legal form of substitution treatment, in 56% of them. In most cases, respondents did not notice a reduction in the availability of outreach programs or in availability of clean injection material. The results of the study also showed that 5 out of 50 respondents were demonstrably infected with COVID-19.

The results of the study serve as a first look into the changes in substance use among people who use at risk during a COVID-19 pandemic. The results serve as feedback for the No biohazard outreach program, while providing an insight into the current situation in the open drug scene. This insight could be used by addictology services on the basis of which they can respond to this situation.

## **Keywords**

drug user, outreach program, COVID-19 pandemic, addiction, quantitative research