Health equity for people who use drugs:
Access to health care through Danish drug consumption rooms

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Human Rights

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing ... including medical care and necessary social services”.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
A global challenge

World-wide 246 mill. people use drugs, 13 mill inject drugs

People who use illicit drugs have higher rate of sickness, higher mortality and lower life expectancy
Lest imagine it is not a crime to use drugs.

How would you treat those affected by addiction?

Barriers to health care

- Costs
- Stigma
- Discrimination in care setting
- Criminal sanctions
What if drug users weren’t criminals but considered as sick people?

How would we treat those affected by addiction?
Harm Reduction aim:
Reduce harms associated with drug use.

Practices:
- Drug testing
- Drug consumption rooms

Programmes:
- Needle exchange
- Opiate substitution treatment
- Low threshold health clinics
- Heroin treatment

Policies:
- Laws
- Decriminalization
Professionally supervised healthcare facilities where drug users can use drugs in safer and more hygienic conditions.

What are Drug Consumption Rooms?
Lest imagine it is not a crime to use drug. How would you treat those affected by addiction?
Mobile unit
Human Rights for drug users interpreted into Danish drug policy

- Every person should have the possibility to take part in society
- No one should be excluded
- Minimize marginalization
- Reduced death by overdose
Drug consumption room

- Treatment of potential intoxication and overdose
- Access to clean needles and syringes
- Hand wash
- Cleaning of skin
- Injection techniques
- Health care
Our study

How DCR staff work to build bridge to health and social services in order to improve health equity among people who use drugs?
Methods

- Participant observation: 250 hours
- Semi-structured interviews:
  - 25 staff
  - 42 drug users
- Organize data using NVivo
Results

Drug user statements
Social acceptance in a secure place

• ”Freedom – from being hunted by the police”

• ”Safety – to be let alone”

• ”Security – if I get something too strong”

Drug user statements
Drug user statements

- “The equipment is sterile - I don’t risk getting Hepatitis C”
- “It is a free space – a capsule”
- “It works like a safe haven”
Results
Staff statements
“The DCRs are a fantastic offer. Both in relation to [redacted] and social aspects to these very marginalized people. We can offer something that makes it possible to improve the health a little bit and give them a room where they have comfort and peace.”

Nurse, DCR
Bridgebuilding

“The entire bridgebuilding takes place when you sit there and have the conversations with them. You see there is something...anything from trouble injecting, offering health advice or talking about living conditions. That way this place is an excellent contact place.”

Nurse, DCR
Micro meetings

“The relation starts when they enter the door…its created by the fact that we have to hand them the needles. I say “hi” and if I don´t know their name I ask. That's the start. The conversation takes off from there”

Nurse, DCR
Golden moments

"Sometimes they come and ask if it is OK that they just come to talk. And sometimes they forget to take their drugs. And then this kind of magic occurs. We have these golden moments. We actually mean something for them…. we show them respect. They also have autonomy and integrity that has to be respected."

Nurse, DCR
Conclusion
Building relationships are the premises

Social inclusion and accept leads to bridgebuilding and possibility for attaining access to healthcare.