



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPULSORY ADDICTION TREATMENT: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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IMPORTANCE OF THIS SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

- Compulsory addiction treatment is being used in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Australia, among other regions.
- While the number of countries using compulsory addiction treatment is declining, both the number of individuals sentenced and the average time they spend in compulsory treatment are on the rise.
- Despite the widespread use of compulsory addiction treatment in a number of settings, its effectiveness in reducing post-treatment drug use, as well as arrests or incarceration for drug-related crimes, has not been systematically evaluated.
- To address this critical gap in the evidence, a systematic review of scientific studies on the topic was conducted to answer the question: *Is compulsory addiction treatment effective in promoting abstinence from drug use or reducing criminal recidivism?*

BOTTOM LINE:

There is little evidence that compulsory addiction treatment is effective in promoting long-term abstinence from drug use or in reducing criminal recidivism.

WHAT THE REVIEW FOUND

- Although the scientific literature evaluating compulsory treatment is limited, the majority of studies (78%) failed to detect any significant positive impacts on drug use or recidivism compared with non-compulsory approaches. Two of the included studies observed negative impacts on recidivism compared with control arms.
- The available scientific evidence does not suggest significantly improved outcomes of compulsory compared with non-compulsory approaches, with some studies suggesting potential harms.

WHAT IS COMPULSORY ADDICTION TREATMENT?

- Compulsory addiction treatment refers to the mandatory enrolment of individuals, who are often but not necessarily drug-dependent, in a drug treatment program or detention facility. It normally consists of forced inpatient treatment, but can be designed as outpatient treatment as well.
- Compulsory treatment differs from coerced treatment, where individuals are provided with a choice to avoid treatment, such as in the drug treatment court model.
- Observers, including numerous United Nations agencies, have expressed concerns given evidence of human rights violations in compulsory addiction treatment centres, including torture and other forms of punishment for individuals who are drug dependent or relapse into drug use.

HOW THE REVIEW WAS CONDUCTED

- Scientists undertook a comprehensive review of existing peer-reviewed scientific evaluations of compulsory addiction treatment.
- The study authors employed the leading scientific protocol for transparent systematic reviews, known as the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PUBLIC POLICY

- Policymakers should replace compulsory addiction treatment with voluntary, evidence-based, and human rights compliant treatment approaches, such as opioid substitution therapy (OST) and heroin-assisted treatment (HAT).

FOR THE FULL REPORT VISIT: WWW.ICSDP.ORG

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