

DRUG AND ALCOHOL RELATED HARM



16TH MAY 2025

Report from the fifth meeting of the Emergency Medicine at the Deep End Group.

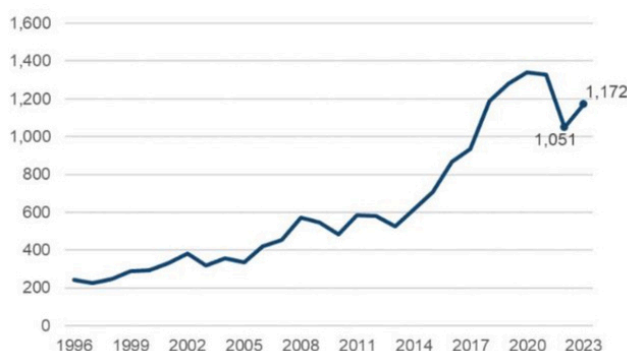
This hybrid event welcomed speakers from diverse backgrounds to discuss opportunities to improve the emergency care for people impacted by substance use, recognising that the burden of these issues falls disproportionately on communities experiencing poverty.

STIGMA

Stigma was a theme that cut across our afternoons discussions. From a number of angles, we recognised the growing evidence of how stigma amplifies harm for people impacted by alcohol and substance use; it impacts their experience of care and their willingness to access care and support.

While this, like many “deep end” themes is a deep cultural issue that doesn’t have an easy or immediate solution, we are encouraged to reflect on how stigma influences emergency care in our own contexts and practice, and to increase our awareness of the internalised stigma that people carry.

Dr Mark McCann from the **Scottish Drug-Related Deaths Study** spoke to us about how they have examined 6608 recent drug deaths with linked data, looking for co-occurrence of events, medications or diagnoses which may indicate potential points for intervention or where systems could be improved. Alongside multi-sector workshops they have used this complex system analysis to derive four key action areas: Addressing stigma, service interactions, enhancing the workforce and improving community connections.



Source: National Records of Scotland

There was rich conversation around how some of the co-occurrences relate to clinical practice and Dr McCann reflected on how useful that feedback has been. We look forward to hearing future findings.



REPURPOSING FLUMAZENIL FOR INTRAMUSCULAR TREATMENT OF COMA DUE TO UNINTENTIONAL DRUG OVERDOSE (RUFUS) STUDY

We heard from Prof Michael Eddleston, Personal Chair of Clinical Toxicology at the University of Edinburgh; describing the rising use of potent benzodiazepenes among people who use drugs. He then presented his study on Flumazenil use for patients presenting with overdose. The first part, based in EDs and led from Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, seeks to establish the safety of Flumazenil in patients with severe mixed overdoses. If the safety of flumazenil is established, the next phase of the study will look at the feasibility of using flumazenil in the pre-hospital environment. [More information here](#)

USEFUL LINKS

Acute Response to Emergency Mental Health and Substance use (ARMHS) Research Network is aiming to develop an understanding of emergency care presentations linked to drugs alcohol and self-harm and promote integrated research. Their recent paper is available [here](#). To join the mailing list email lisa.scholin@ed.ac.uk

Poverty Stigma: a glue that holds poverty in place.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation have produced a report on phase one of their work on [Poverty Stigma](#)

NHS Scotland Event 9th June

EM @ the Deep End will be presenting a poster at the NHS Scotland Event. We'd love to hear your thoughts or feedback so please have a look if you're attending

Change continues with me: EDI Study Day Wednesday 18th June

Virtual RCEM study day on key current Equality, Diversity and Inclusion topics with a focus on systemic and interpersonal barriers faced by minorities colleagues and patients

NALOXONE

Hospital discharge is a high risk moment for overdose. Mariebeth Kilbride from the Scottish Drugs Forum spoke about the Naloxone programme and attempts to increase naloxone provision to people who may be at risk of overdose. We discussed costs and barriers associated with this and it was highlighted that the Scottish Ambulance Service are able to provide naloxone to anyone who has had an overdose and Navigators are also able to supply this in ED if there is not currently take home provision from ED stock. She highlighted the risk of patients taking their own discharge so having naloxone in their belongings early could be of benefit. Mariebeth is happy to be contacted to discuss training and provision: mariebethk@sdf.org.uk

NEXT MEETING: 31ST OCTOBER 2025 13.30-16.30

We're going on tour to Victoria Hospital in Fife for a Mental Health themed meeting and to hear about the work that they are doing to improve care for people with mental health problems, substance use and psychological distress. Join us in person or look out for the teams link



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Read our recent publication [here](#)

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