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***national programme on Substance Abuse Deaths  
(np-SAD)***

**18th Surveillance Report: January - June 2006**

**Inquests into drug-related deaths reported by Coroners in England,  
Wales, Northern Ireland, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man &  
Procurators Fiscal in Scotland**

The National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths (np-SAD) has published its eighteenth 6-monthly surveillance report on inquests completed into drug-related deaths in the UK. As in previous years, the data and analysis in this report is intended to inform authorities at the local, regional and national levels, as well as health professionals and the general public, about the serious consequences of drug abuse. The report provides also a number of indicators of drug abuse patterns, trends and early warnings on emerging drug problems so that appropriate and timely action can be taken.

The National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths (np-SAD) is managed within the overall structure of the International Centre for Drug Policy within the Division of Mental Health, St. George's, University of London.

The Programme's principal aim is to reduce and prevent drug-related deaths in the UK due to the misuse of drugs, both licit and illicit, by collecting, analysing and disseminating information on the extent and nature of death.

This report was commissioned by the Department of Health.

**Key points**

The main findings reported in this 6-monthly surveillance report on inquests completed between 1 January and 30 June 2006 are:

- ◆ A total of 687 inquests into drug-related deaths were reported to the np-SAD for the period January to June 2006. Information was submitted by 105 out of 118 coroners in England & Wales, as well as Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, together with one Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. (Data are not presently available for Northern Ireland.) Any information not received by the closing date for this report will be included in future reports. This number of cases reported on in this analysis is about 9 per cent fewer than in the same period in 2005.
- ◆ The demographic profile remains consistent with that of previous reports. The majority of cases were males (76%), under the age of 45 years (74%), and White (96%).

- ◆ Fifty-nine percent of cases died from accidental poisoning. This is an increase of six percentage points compared to the previous year. The proportion of inquests into intentional self-poisoning cases fell from 30% to 15% in the first half of 2006.
- ◆ Opiates/opioids (i.e. heroin/morphine; methadone; other opiates/opioid analgesics), alone or in combination with other drugs, accounted for the majority (73%) of fatalities where a psychoactive substance was implicated.
- ◆ Heroin/morphine alone or in combination with other drugs, accounted for the highest proportion (47%) of fatalities, a decrease of two percentage points over the level for the corresponding period in 2005.
- ◆ The majority of cases where methadone, hypnotics/sedatives, or other opiates/opioid analgesics were implicated involved drugs which had been prescribed for others. The reverse was true for anti-depressants.
- ◆ The following jurisdictions recorded the highest semi-annual drug-related death rate per 100,000 population aged 16 years and over: Blackpool and the Fylde (9.4); Brighton & Hove (8.0); East Lancashire (5.8); and Inner South London (5.5).
- ◆ The following jurisdictions reported significantly lower rates per 100,000 population aged 16 and over than in the corresponding period in 2005: Isle of Man (from 11.3 to 0.0: from 7 to 0 cases); Newcastle-upon-Tyne (6.3 to 0.4: from 14 to 1 case); Dumbarton (9.5 to 4.1: from 9 to 4 cases); Neath & port Talbot (5.5 to 0.9: from 6 to 1 case); Liverpool (7.7 to 3.8: from 28 to 14 cases); and Greater Suffolk (3.7 to 0.3: from 14 to 1 case).
- ◆ The following jurisdictions reported significantly higher rates per 100,000 population aged 16 and over than in the corresponding period in 2005: South London (from 2.1 to 5.5: from 17 to 44 cases); Western Cumbria (1.0 to 4.1: from 1 to 4 cases); Blackburn, Hyndburn & Ribble Valley (0.0 to 2.8: from 0 to 6 cases); Isle of Wight (0.0 to 2.6: from 0 to 3 cases); Blackpool and the Fylde (7.2 to 9.4: from 13-17 cases); and Southern Cumbria & Furness (0.7 to 2.8: from 1 to 4 cases).
- ◆ Areas showing increases in semi-annual death rates over the last four comparable surveillance periods (i.e. January to June 2003 – January to June 2006) were: Blackpool & the Fylde (4.1 to 9.4/100,000 population); Teesside (1.2 to 3.8); and The Wrekin (0.0 to 2.4).
- ◆ The semi-annual death rates have fallen in each of the last four comparable surveillance periods in the following areas: Inner West London (2.6 to 0.1); Avon (2.8 to 0.6); Birmingham (2.6 to 0.1); South & West Cambridgeshire (2.6 to 0.3); Gwent (2.2 to 0.2); and Southern London (1.8 to 0.5).
- ◆ The following perceptible changes were also observed compared to the same period in 2005:
  - An increase in the number of cases involving methadone from 85 to 102
  - An increase in the number of cases involving cocaine from 90 to 93
  - An increase in the number of cases involving alcohol from 192 to 194
  - The number of cases involving amphetamines went from none to 20.
  - The number of cases involving ketamine went from none to two

- A decrease in the number of cases involving anti-depressants from 134 to 101
- A decrease in the number of cases involving heroin/morphine from 326 to 301
- A decrease in the number of cases involving anti-psychotics from 38 to 20
- A decrease in the number of cases involving hypnotics/sedatives from 115 to 100
- A decrease in the number of cases involving other opiates/ opioid analgesics from 145 to 134
- A decrease in the number of cases involving GHB from four to two

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Printed copies of the report "*national programme* on Substance Abuse Deaths (np-SAD) 18th Surveillance Report: January - June 2006 - Inquests into drug-related deaths reported by Coroners in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man & Procurators Fiscal in Scotland" are available from:

National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths,  
International Centre for Drug Policy,  
St George's, University of London,  
Cranmer Terrace  
London SW17 0RE.

Copies of the report are £5.including postage and packaging (within the UK).

Copies of earlier Annual Reports as well as six-monthly surveillance reports are still available for purchase.

### **Contacts**

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