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Title	Analysis of service-users attending Matt Talbot Services (MTS) from 2007-2010.
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Publication date	2012-10-29
Original Citation	Murphy K., Sahm L., Lambert S., Byrne S. (2012) 'Analysis of service-users attending Matt Talbot Services (MTS) from 2007-2010', European Society of Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP) 41st Symposium on Clinical Pharmacy Barcelona, Spain, 29 - 31 October, in International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy (2013) 35(5), pp. 995. doi: 10.1007/s11096-013-9801-0
Type of publication	Conference item
Link to publisher's version	http://www.escpweb.org/ - 10.1007/s11096-013-9801-0https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11096-013-9801-0
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Download date	2026-10-05 12:39:09
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/6202

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A descriptive analysis of service-users attending an outpatient treatment centre during 2007 - 2010

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Background:

- More than a quarter (27.3%) of 15-24 year-olds in Ireland experimented with illegal substances in their lives[1].
- Nearly 1-in-12 (8.2%) drug treatment cases was to a service-user under 18 years of age[2].
- Approximately 1-in-7 (14.8%) deaths due to drugs occurred in under-25s[3].
- Matt Talbot Services (MTS) is a day treatment service for young substance-users within Cork/Kerry area of Ireland.
- They provide a specialised, individualised counselling service for 14 – 23 year olds, and an after-care service to reduce the incidence of relapse.
- This exploratory work will serve as a base for future pharmaceutical care interventions and research on adolescent use of illegal and prescription substances.

Aims:

The aims were as follows:

1. Analyse demographic information on service-users attending MTS between 2007 and 2010.
2. Describe the type and nature of substance use among service-users.
3. Perform inferential statistics to detect patterns in service-user behaviour.

Method:

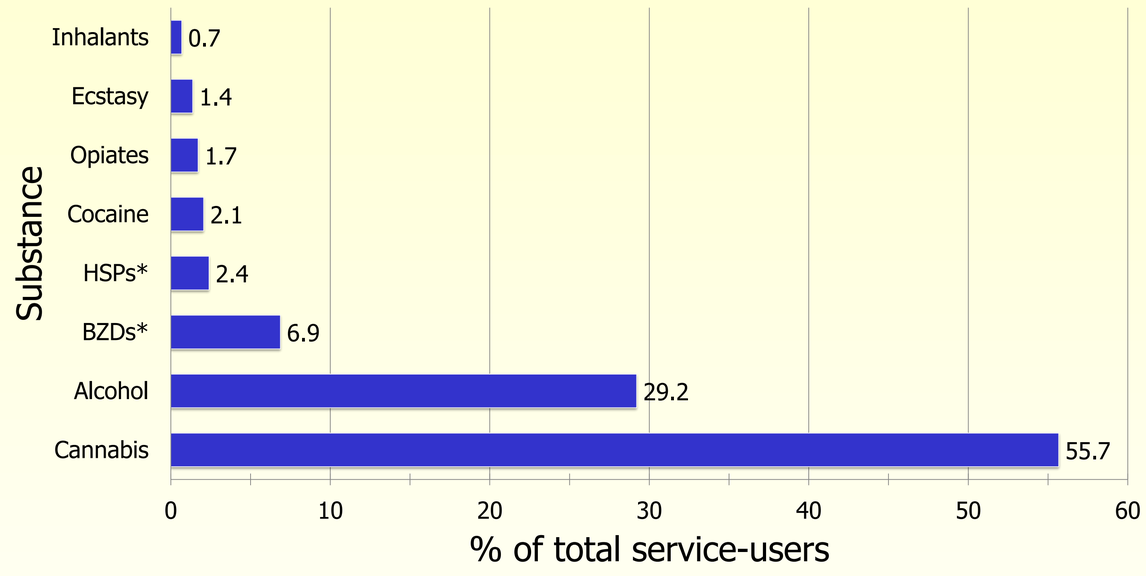
- Data from the records of entrants to the service between 2007 and 2010 (n=291) was collected and included:
  - Demographic data
  - Educational and employment history
  - Substance use history
  - Treatment details
- Data was analysed using Predictive Analytics SoftWare Statistics (PASW; SPSS Inc. Chicago, Ill.) version 18.0.
- Descriptive analysis was performed on the data. Inferential tests measuring for association were also performed.

Results:

Results of the analysis of service-user demographics and substance history can be seen in Table 1, and Figures 1 and 2.

Table 1. Demographics of service-users (n=291)

Service-user Demographics	Number of service-users (%)
Male	276 (94.8%)
Age mean ± SD (years)	16.7 ± 2.05
Irish nationality	281 (96.6%)
Living with parents/family	249 (85.6%)
Living in an urban area	142 (48.8%)
Student	102 (35.1%)



*BZDs - Benzodiazepines, HSDs – Head Shop Products

Figure 1. Primary substance of abuse

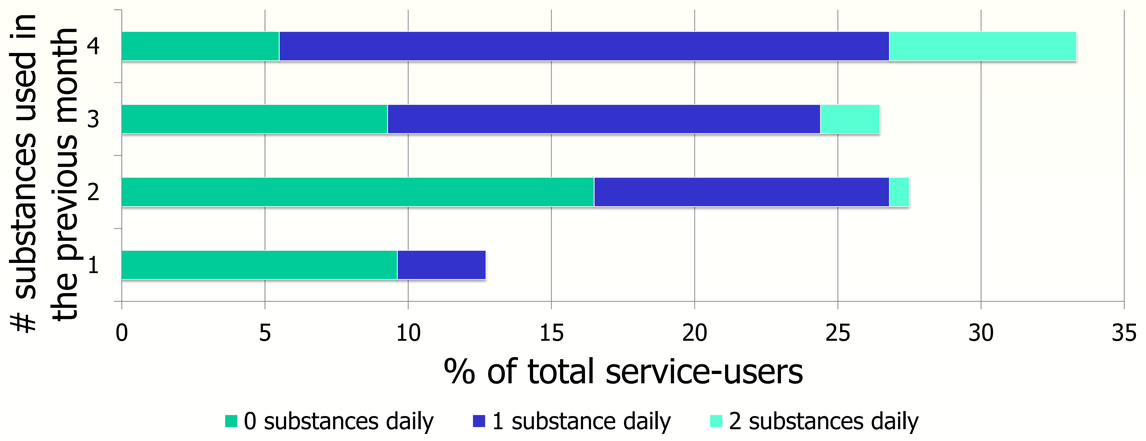


Figure 2. Polysubstance use among service-users

- Those who first experimented before 13 years of age were 1.4 times more likely to be daily users (p=0.033)
- Greater number of substances used monthly by urban dwellers (p=0.004) and early school-leavers (p=0.018)
- Those who first experimented before 13 years of age were 3.9 times more likely to have used benzodiazepines in the previous month (p=0.003)

Conclusions:

- Substance use by adolescents in the Cork/Kerry area is a serious issue.
- Pharmacists possess the ideal background and knowledge to develop interventions which will form part of a substance withdrawal algorithm in the wider challenge of service-user rehabilitation.
- Recognition of the problem and establishing the level of substance use is the first step towards meaningful resolution which will require all stakeholders' input.

Limitations:

- Tobacco use was not surveyed; it is often the 1st substance to be experimented with[4].
- Study was based on self-reported data; patients may not remember details of past use accurately.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all the staff of Matt Talbot Services for the co-operation they provided us throughout the duration of the study.

References available on request. Any comments should be directed to kev.mur21@gmail.com