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Patient's perspective on Medication-Assisted Treatment for opioid addiction

Criminology Researchers at Mid Sweden University developed a Problem-Oriented Policing Strategy for a drug market operative in the city center of a middle-sized city in northern Sweden. The project gathered several research studies that addressed specific questions. One of the studies aimed to examine factors determinant of success of the opioid substitution treatment, a drug related treatment programme that has been questioned in Sweden since its implementation in the mid 1960s. This paper analyses the patients' own perspective about what works in the Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) in the local context.

Potential participants were contacted through the clinic setting using convenience sampling. Recruitment ended when data saturation was attained. In total 19 patients were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. The analysis focused on how the patients themselves experience MAT from a life-course perspective as well as the importance of MAT in the desistance process of heavy drug use and its possible consequences.

The participants had voluntarily applied for MAT in order to have an opportunity to restart a new life. They believe that MAT, unlike other more traditional treatments (e.g. 12-steps), is what counteracted relapse in drug use. From their perspective, the rehabilitation, including relapse prevention, is of great importance in order to achieve a functional life free from drug addiction. The prerequisite for the actual rehabilitation to succeed is to have access to the opioid substitute that reduce the craving for opiates.

Overall, the results showed that although the medication is a very important ingredient to a successful treatment, it is not the single

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solution. Medication should be combined with a whole program of individualized treatment to get the desired results. Furthermore, because of the discussion about this kind of treatment still ongoing in Sweden, the respondents feel stigmatized and find problems to get new attachments and involvements.

Med vänlig hälsning,
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