



COMPULSORY DRUG TREATMENT IN THAILAND FAILS TO REDUCE DRUG USE AND IS ASSOCIATED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Although addiction is a health issue, Thailand, like many other countries, has continued to rely on enforcement and coercion when dealing with people who inject drugs.
- The Thai government has implemented compulsory drug treatment centres throughout the country. These centres are run like military 'boot camps' that offer little in the way of evidence-based addiction treatment programming.
- During August 2008, researchers working with the Mitsampan Community Research Project examined experiences with compulsory drug treatment among 252 Thai people who inject drugs.

QUICK FACT

85% OF PARTICIPANTS WHO HAD BEEN IN COMPULSORY TREATMENT CONTINUED USING DRUGS AFTER LEAVING.

FINDINGS

- The study found that 32% of participants had been in compulsory treatment.
- In comparison to other participants, people who had been in compulsory treatment spent more money on drugs each day and were almost two times more likely to have had drugs planted on them by Thai police.
- 85% of those who had been in compulsory treatment continued using drugs after leaving the treatment centre.
- Current levels of drug use were the same among participants who had and had not been in compulsory treatment experience.

IMPLICATIONS

- Thailand's conflicting drug control and addiction treatment programs appear to be undermining efforts to protect the human rights of people who use drugs, particularly the right to health.
- Until the penal approach is reconciled with an evidence-based approach, compulsory 'treatment' centres will continue to fail to fulfill drug users' health needs, including their access to HIV prevention and treatment.

Csete J, Kaplan K, Hayashi K, Fairbairn N, Suwannawong P, Zhang R, Wood E, Kerr T. **Compulsory drug detention center experiences among a community-based sample of injection drug users in Bangkok, Thailand.** *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 2011; 11: 12.

