CHARACTERIZING DROP-OUT AMONG PATIENTS AT METHADONE MAINTENANCE (MMT) CLINICS IN VIETNAM

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Introduction. By 2013, approximately 15,000 MMT patients were being treated in Vietnam. The national goal is to have 80,000 patients on MMT by 2015. While increasing the number of patients, retaining patients on MMT is equally important.

Methods. The Drop-out ratio was calculated and reasons for drop out identified based on program monitoring during 2011-2013. The cumulative number of patients included in this analysis was 6213 at 17 clinics in 6 provinces.

Results. The rate of patient drop-out was less than 4% monthly in all clinics, but cumulatively up to 24% of patients enrolled in treatment dropped out the 3 year period. Reasons for drop included patients arrested by police (25%), moved to other clinics (4%), returned to rehabilitation (3%), and voluntarily stopping treatment (3%). The reason was unknown for a high proportion of loss to follow-up (55%).

Conclusions. Drop-out is serious threat to the success of the MMT program in Vietnam. MMT clinic staff should provide education and counseling for patients to avoid illegal activities, arrest and interruption of MMT. Research should be conducted to understand the characteristics of drop-out patients and develop more effective interventions for improving retention.