

Reducing injecting drug use risks by providing foil to smoke heroin: A service improvement pilot evaluation.

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Background

The Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs suggests the provision of foil to smoke heroin could reduce injecting related harms, Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) infections, overdoses, injecting drug use, drug related litter and drug related crime¹.

In 2013 in the UK it became legal to provide foil as part of a harm reduction intervention². In Tayside there has been no provision of foil.

Study Aims

The aim of the pilot is to provide support for the effectiveness of foil provision as a harm reduction strategy for the population of Tayside.



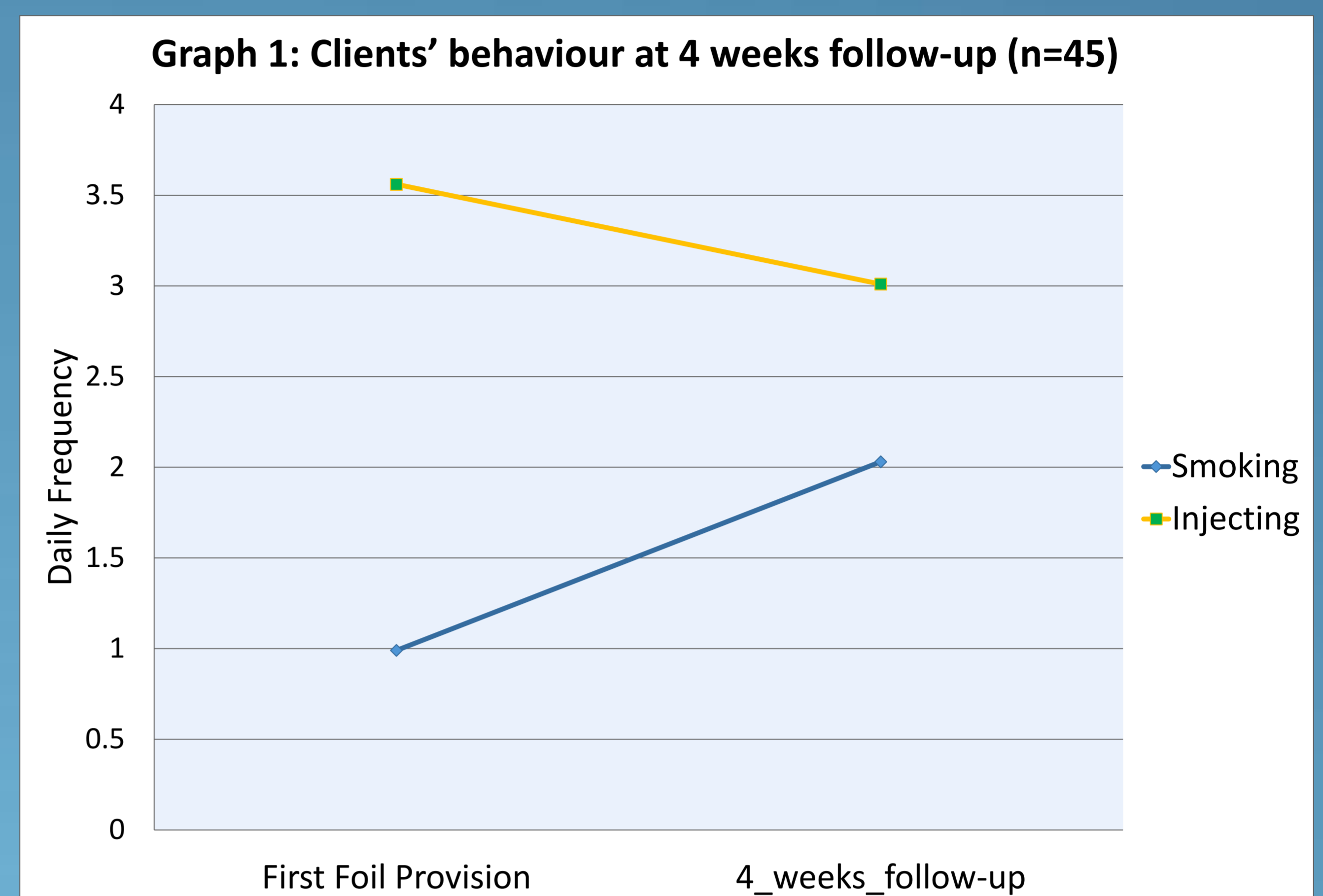
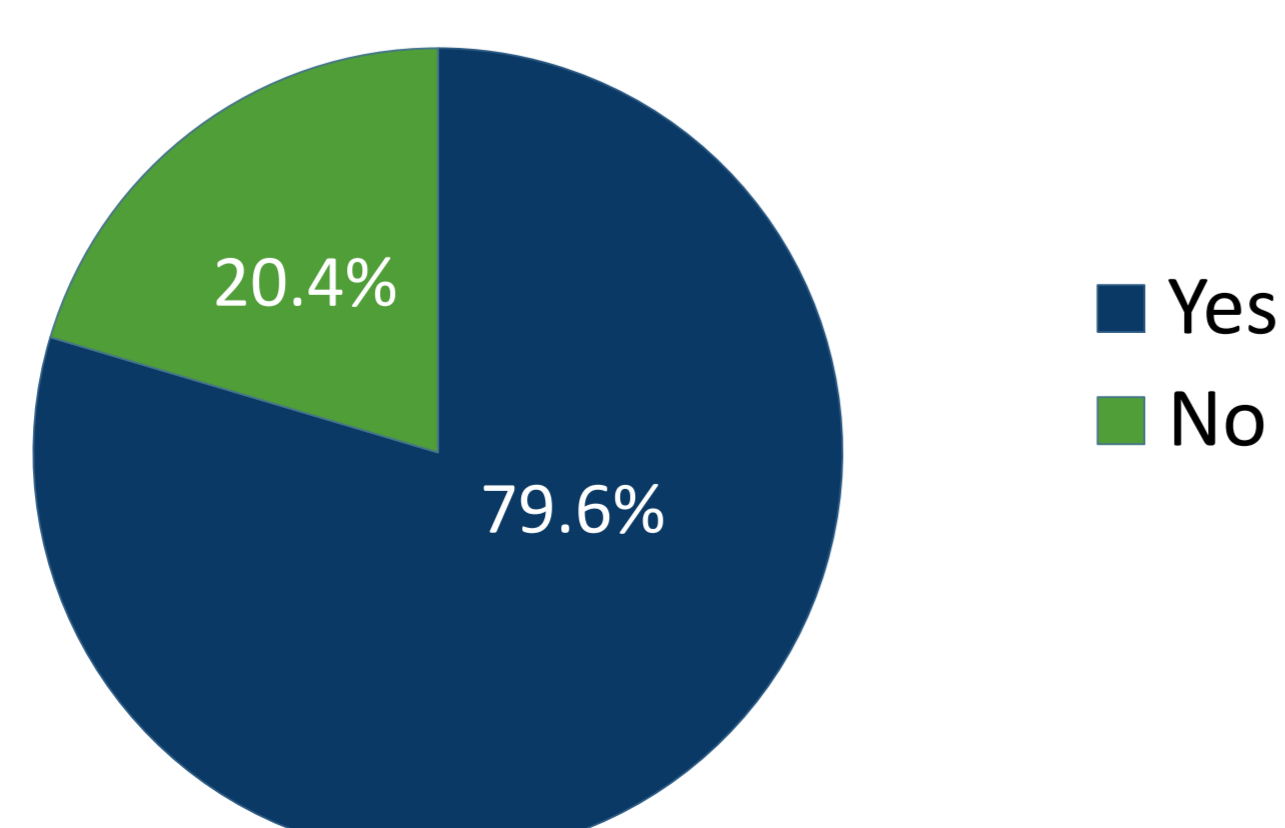
Picture 1: Smoke. Source: pixabay.com/en/smoke-tobacco-smoking-1001667/

Methods

Clients of the Cairn Centre enhanced injecting equipment provision (IEP) site taking equipment for groin or neck injecting were offered foil and asked to self-report average daily injecting instances and average smoking instances.

Follow-up occurred at approximately 4 weeks.

Chart 1: Clients % who had previously smoked heroin



Results

Fifty-four IEP clients were provided with foil (20.4% had never previously smoked). Forty-five clients were followed up at 4 weeks (83.3% retention rate).

A Wilcoxon Signed Rank test showed that smoking frequency increased significantly between time points, $Z = -4.495$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size $r = .5$, and that injecting frequency decreased significantly between time points, $Z = -3.353$, $p = .001$, with a medium effect size $r = .37$.

Discussion

Despite the difficulty following up clients, this service improvement pilot demonstrated that provision of foil contributes to a significant decrease in injecting behaviour, therefore reducing the health and social risks associated with this activity. A wider roll-out of foil provision should be considered.

References

- ¹ACMD (2010). Consideration of the use of foil as an intervention to reduce the harms of heroin. Accessed online on 28/06/16 www.gov.uk/government/publications/foil-report
- ²PHE (2014). Aluminium foil for smoking drugs. A brief for commissioners and providers of services for people who use drugs. Accessed on 28/06/16 www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/phe-foil-briefing.pdf

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