

HARM REDUCTION IN COVID19 PANDEMIC
experience of the Croatian Red Cross



CROATIAN RED CROSS

Resolution 42/112 of 7.10.1987 the UN General Assembly declares June 26 as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

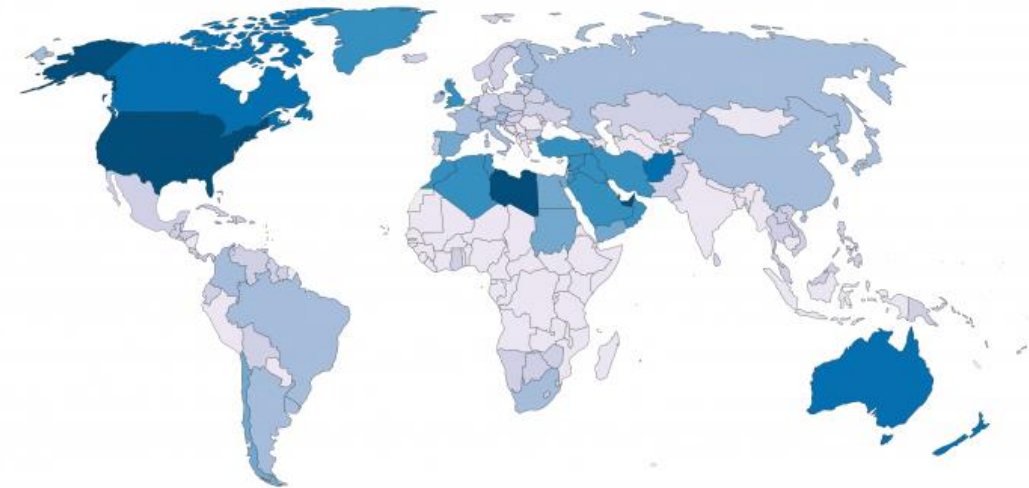
Objective:
to achieve an international society free of drug use

- 2020
- Health for Justice. Justice for Health.
- Around 269 million people used drugs worldwide
(UNODC World Drug Report 2020)
- Global drug use rising
- COVID19 has far reaching impact on global drug market

Share of population with drug use disorders, 2017

Drug dependence is defined by the International Classification of Diseases as the presence of three or more indicators of dependence for at least a month within the previous year. Drug dependency includes all illicit drugs.

Our World
in Data



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

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UNODC World Drug Report 2020



- **35 million** people suffer from drug use disorder
- **Impact of COVID19 to drug markets:** shortages of drugs on the street , increased prices, reduced purity
- **Most vulnerable groups:** youth, women, unemployed
- **Additional risk** - increased unemployment and reduced opportunities caused by the COVID19 pandemic
- **New routes and methods of drug n trafficking** – darknet , shipments by mail
- **COVID19 impact** – opioid shortages; people seeking out more readily available substances - **alcohol, benzodiazepines or mixing with synthetic drugs**; some users **switch to injecting** or more frequent injecting
- **Cannabis** – the most used substance worldwide (192 million people , World Drug Report 2018)
- **Opioids – remain the most harmful** – total number of deaths due to opioid use disorder went **up 71%** (increase of **92% among woman**, compared with **63% among men**)
- **2000 - 2018 rapid growth of drug use in developing countries** compared to developed countries
- **The most vulnerable: adolescents and younger adult groups**
- **More than 90% of all pharmaceutical opioids available for medical consumption** were in **high - income countries**
- **The main risks that encourage drug use - poverty, limited education, social marginalization**
- **Discrimination and stigma** - the main barriers to getting treatment services **marginalized and vulnerable groups**

HARM REDUCTION IN COVID19 PANDEMIC

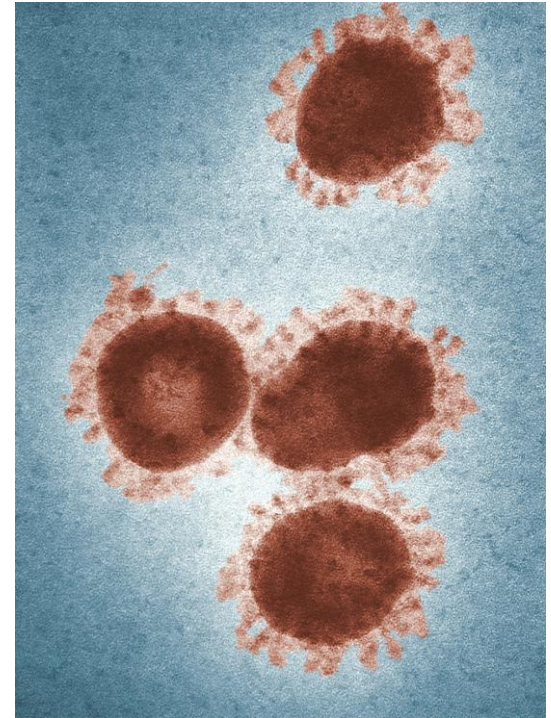
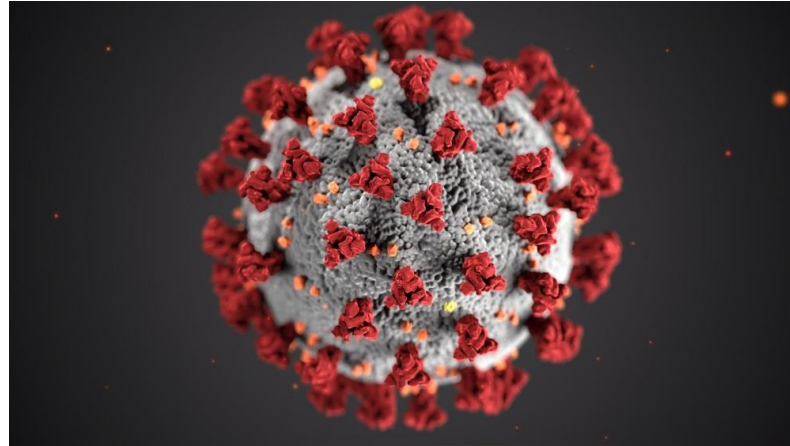
HARM REDUCTION

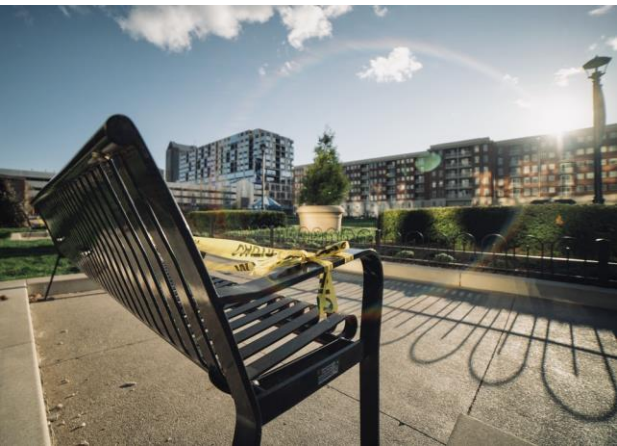
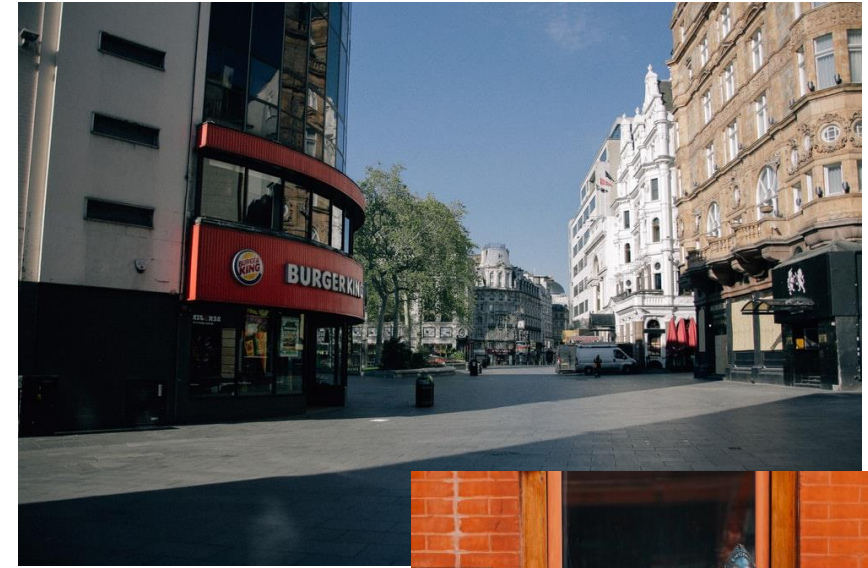
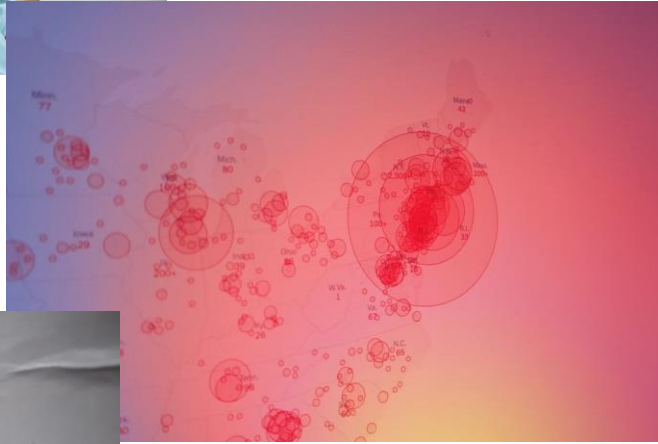
an extensive package of science-based information programs for people who use drugs; nine components

(UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines – January 2011)

1. Opioid substitution therapy
2. HIV testing and counseling
3. HIV care and antiretroviral therapy for injecting drug users (IDUs)
4. Prevention of sexual transmission
5. Outreach (information, education, communication with IDU and their sexual partners)
6. Diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis
7. Hepatitis vaccination
8. Tuberculosis prevention (TB)
9. TB diagnosis and treatment

SARS-Cov-2





CROATIAN RED CROSS HARM REDUCTION IN COVID19 PANDEMIC

- programs in Zagreb, Zadar, Krapina
- all the time COVID19 were active
- mode of activities in accordance with the epidemiological situation



RULES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF HARM REDUCTION ACTIVITIES OF THE CRC CONSIDERING THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL RISK OF CORONA VIRUS INFECTION

- All Harm Reduction activities in their client business can run a **maximum of 2 hours**
- The programs **only replace syringes and needles** and receive used syringes and needles.
- HCV and HIV **testing is suspended** until further notice
- **Prolonged retention of clients** in syringe and needle exchange areas **is prohibited**. Users can come, change accessories and then leave the space
- The **use of toilets** for clients in the premises of the program **is prohibited**
- The possibility of **drinking coffee, using a PC and staying** with the purpose of socializing **is suspended**
- **All Harm Reduction workers** must always take personal hygiene measures when working with clients, which means:
 - use protective latex gloves in everyday work
 - use protective masks (FFP masks, surgical masks for personal protection)
 - wash hands regularly more often in accordance with the prescribed rules and then use hand sanitizer

These rules must be displayed in a visible place and all clients of Harm Reduction services must be familiar with them

PROTOCOL OF HARM REDUCTION ACTIVITIES IN COVID19 PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

- Harm Reduction programs **can work working hours**
- In situation of „**lock down**“ **Harm Reduction programm work 3 (three) working hours a day**
- The **activities include** replacement of syringes and needles, receipt of used syringes and needles, testing with Ora Quick tests for HIV and HCV, counseling and support / referral for the treatment of addiction.
- **Testing for HIV and HCV** until further notice is performed in accordance with the **Protocol for the use of rapid HIV / HCV tests in the conditions of COVID19 pandemic**
- **Retention of clients** in the program premises is allowed **if epidemiological protection measures are implemented:**
 - 1) maintaining a physical **distance between persons of 2 meters**
 - 2) **mandatory hand disinfection** with disinfectants containing at least 70% ethyl alcohol
 - 3) **mandatory wearing of a protective FFP (surgical) mask** of persons staying in the program
- The **possibility of drinking coffee / tea** can be done only by **using disposable plastic / cardboard cups**, plastic spoons and applying a mandatory physical distance of 2 meters between persons
- **Clients cannot use PC until further notice**
- **All Harm Reduction workers** must always take **personal hygiene measures** when working with clients, which means:
 - use protective latex gloves in everyday work
 - use protective masks (FFP masks, surgical masks for personal protection)
 - wash hands regularly more often in accordance with the prescribed rules and then use hand sanitizer

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PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF RAPID HIV / HCV TESTS IN COVID19 PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

Rapid OraQuick HIV / HCV tests are used for clients in the Harm Reduction programs of the Croatian Red Cross . **Due to the risk of COVID19 infection during testing:**

- **The client** who comes for testing **should be asked if he has symptoms of COVID19 : weakness, cough, shortness of breath, fever.**
- **Prior to testing**, each **client** must have his **temperature measured** with a non-contact thermometer . If any of the symptoms are present, the client cannot be tested.
- The person performing the test must have a protective FFP mask (surgical mask) and protective latex gloves
- **The person being tested should be taught to take oral fluid samples independently.** The person should pass the test plate several times over the front of the gums. A swab of the tongue or mouth should not be taken
- After the client has moistened the test plate, it is given to the tester, who places it in reagent tubes.
- After reading the results, rapid test pieces (test plates and test tubes with reagent) should be disposed of in a container in which infectious waste is otherwise disposed of
- After disposing of the waste, the tester removes the protective mask, protective latex gloves, disposes of them in the waste and disinfects the hands with a hand sanitizer containing 70% medical alcohol

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? HARM ACTIVITIES CRC

NUMBER OF CLIENTS	2019.	COVID19 (March / December 2020)
Zagreb	150	33 / 177
Zadar	320	89 / 399
Krapina	40	8 / 27

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? HARM ACTIVITIES CRC

- During the COVID19 epidemic, **an initiative of NGOs** implementing Harm Reduction in Croatia (“nomina sunt odiosa”):
- „... a letter should be sent to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia to enable addicts who are on substitution therapy to receive a larger amount of therapy, so that they do not have to come every day for therapy, but once a week; given the risk of COVID19 infection.... ””



- **WRONG !!!!!!!**
- „... „*The road to hell is paved with good intentions*”.....
- BECAUSE:
- Harm Reduction users - "problem drug users" (UNODC)
- In crisis situations, **therapeutic measures must be intensified** to control and prevent possible manipulation
- **Harm Reduction - damage reduction !!!!!**
- **IMPORTANT** - involvement of educated MD in the business of HR programs

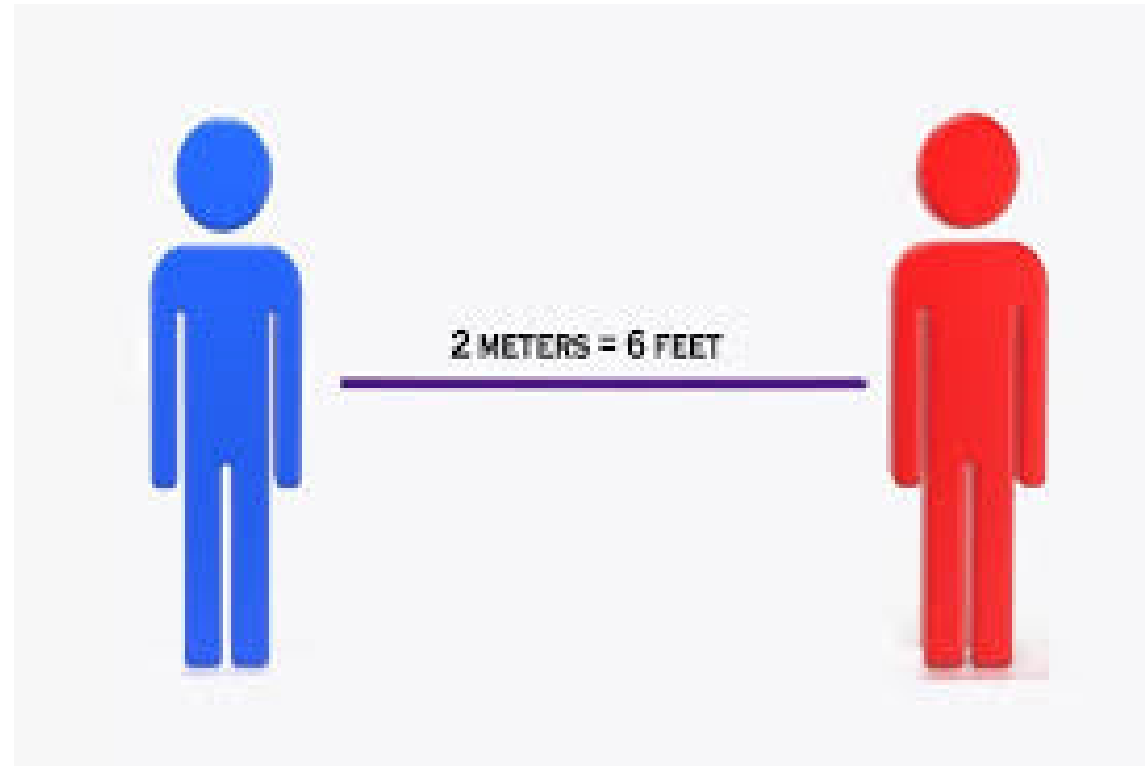


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... I AM
DOCTOR... TRUST
ME !!!!.....











**HARM REDUCTION
WORKS!**

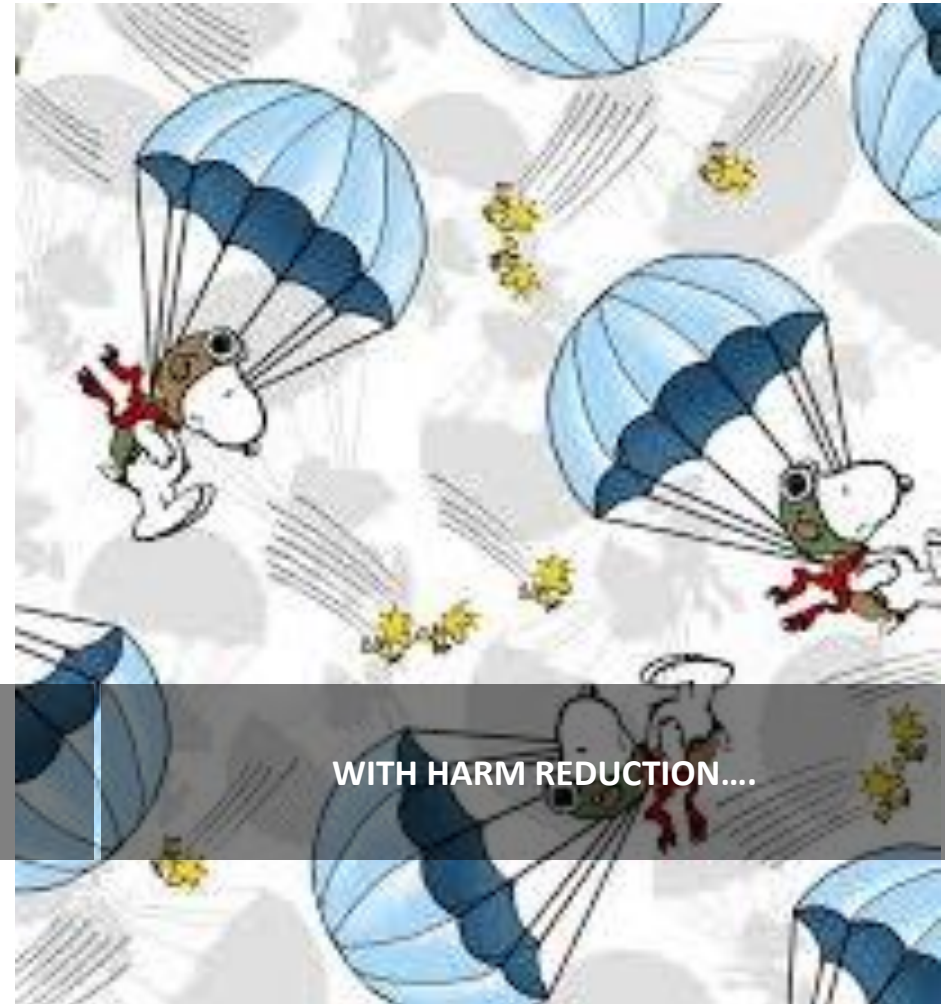


IT'S ALL ABOUT THE
**SEX
&
DRUGS
&
HARM
REDUCTION**


**KEEP
CALM
SUPPORT
HARM
REDUCTION**



WITHOUT HARM REDUCTION.....



WITH HARM REDUCTION....