



Linking Therapeutic Community and Harm Reduction The Daytop Prevention and Recovery Centre for Drug Dependency

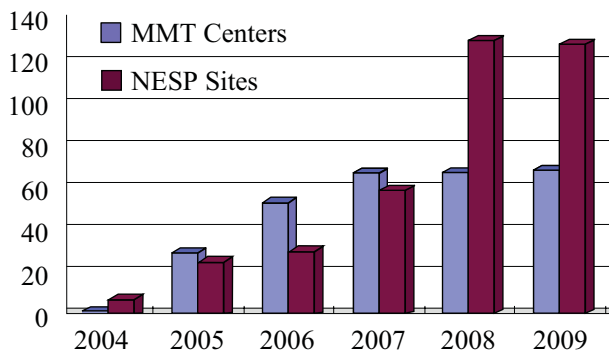
Experiences from the AIDS Response in China

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Harm Reduction in China

China has made rapid advances in addressing the issue of drug use and HIV in recent years, and especially in providing services to current and former drug users. These services include HIV prevention, care and treatment, as well as harm reduction services. While maintaining a firm policy prohibiting illegal drug use, China has adopted policies that allow harm reduction and other services to be provided to both current and former drug users.

Increase in Number of Sites Delivering MMT and Clean Needle Services in Yunnan Province (2004-2009)



While most of these services remain within the government system, there are both local and international NGOs working with the Government to reach drug users in a number of provinces. The Daytop Prevention and Recovery Centre for Drug Dependency, an NGO in Yunnan province, started work in 1998 and was the first of its kind in China. Initially a voluntary drug rehabilitation center, Daytop has expanded to provide a range of harm reduction, HIV prevention and other services.

History and Philosophy

The Daytop concept was initially designed in the United States as a voluntary drug detoxification model to treat soldiers who were addicted to drugs, when they returned from the war in Vietnam. Because of its success, the model has to date been implemented in 66 countries worldwide. The goal is to “return clients to society as productive, responsible and drug-free citizens.” Daytop in Yunnan has adjusted the US model to Chinese realities and stresses the need for a comprehensive approach, linking drug detoxification to harm reduction services, peer counseling, HIV testing and referral to additional services such as ARV treatment where necessary.

The Centre works to create a supportive peer environment for residents, a family-like setting known as a Therapeutic Community (TC) in which the dignity of each person is respected in order to reduce stigma. Since its opening in 1998, the Centre has treated nearly 3484 drug users in the TC. A high percentage of the Centre’s staff in Kunming are former IDUs who have successfully quit using drugs, living proof that the programme can succeed and allow people to return to stable and drug-free lives.

The rate of relapse for those who complete the full 12-month stay in the TC in Yunnan is much lower (less than 30%) than what is generally seen in government-run compulsory detoxification facilities (over 80%).

Comprehensive Approach and Results

A fundamental principle of Daytop’s approach is that it must respond to real needs of the community

in order to be effective. Based on this philosophy, the Centre has remained on the “front line” of adapting its services to most effectively serve its clients and help them break free of drug dependency.

According to this principle, the most effective approach is to provide a range of acceptable and appropriate services at the community level, to maximize the number of drug users reached and effectively overcome their drug dependency.

“Daytop has always been open and flexible... they adopt new approaches and methods to more effectively provide services to drug users.”

Yunnan CDC official

Daytop operates on the principle of voluntary drug rehabilitation. It was the first such center in Yunnan, and remains the only center providing a broad range of services in addition to the TC. Part of its success is the fact that the programme provides – and brings together – a number of services, to create a “one stop shop” covering the

needs of drug users with a broad range of services, information and support. Daytop has been working closely with the provincial authorities and was among the pioneers in Yunnan and China in setting up these services:

- **Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT):** Daytop provides short-course Methadone treatment and currently serves more than 220 people daily at its Kunming MMT center, more than most other sites in Yunnan. Between Oct 1998 and the end of 2009, more than 4000 IDU have received MMT services (including both short-term and long-term Methadone) through Daytop facilities.
- **Needle and Syringe Exchange Programme (NSP):** Daytop has distributed 680,000 clean needles and syringes since 2001. Most noteworthy is the fact that the return rate of distributed needles and syringes is almost complete (98%) which is at the top end of the range when compared to international standards.
- **Peer Education:** A recent study has shown that more than half of injecting drug users (57%)¹ do not see themselves as being at high risk of HIV infection, despite widespread high risk behavior including

What is a Therapeutic Community?

The Therapeutic Community (TC) is a drug-free self help programme, the primary goals of which are to facilitate cessation of substance abuse behaviors and the fostering of personal growth. The TC model incorporates nine essential elements. They are: active participation, membership feedback, role modeling, collective formats for guiding individual change, shared norms and values, structure and systems, open communication, individual and group relationships and a unique terminology.

The TC includes both professional and paraprofessional staff. Peer educators are an essential part of the program's effectiveness, as is the inclusion of professionals from the fields of medicine, mental health, education, and law.

Treatment in the TC begins with entry into the community. Here the member learns the values and norms of the community, which are a reflection of those held by society. In the middle phase of treatment, members explore individual histories and experiences, practice new behaviors and begin to gain increased self-esteem and knowledge of themselves. The next phase of treatment involves the important task of re-entry into the larger community. New ways of relating to others are practiced and members gain valuable experience in working or going to school outside the TC while receiving support from the community. Ultimately, the member will be ready to live independently and continue to gain support from an aftercare programme².

¹ “HIV Risk Behaviors and Perspectives of Injecting Drug Users in Yunnan Province, China”, Eleanor Morrison, PSI Research & Metrics Working Paper No. 66, July 2007, p. 3.

² <http://www.daytop.org/>

needle sharing and unprotected sex. Peer education is a critical component in reaching out to communities. It is one of the proven and most cost effective measures in reaching those at highest risk. Daytop trained more than 500 peer educators between April 2002 and December 2009. More than 2000 people were reached through peer education and received comprehensive education and counseling during the period 2007-2008 alone. Daytop provides a broad range of information and peer support related to HIV, including overdose prevention, safe injection techniques, and HIV prevention methods.

- HIV Testing: Daytop provides VCT inside its MMT clinic, and about 2500 people received VCT during 2007-2008 alone. Based on its extensive experience, the programme has also initiated a project to provide VCT inside government detoxification centers in Kunming.
- Referral to ARV Treatment: Daytop provides ARV treatment referral, information and counseling, and has helped more than 100 clients to enter government treatment programmes since Oct 2004.



Experiences in Community Treatment

There is no single definition of “community treatment”, but Daytop’s experiences have included some important elements that may be included in a package or continuum of care provided at the community level.

- Voluntary rehabilitation within the community (i.e. not compulsory treatment in a closed setting) gives people a sense of dignity and creates an environment that is much more conducive to drug rehabilitation.
- A continuum of services, support and information available at community-level helps current and former drug users to stop using drugs and to remain off drugs.
- The experience and trust of peer educators who have themselves successfully overcome drug dependence gives IDUs confidence and hope. Daytop also provides capacity training and real job opportunities through its programmes, giving former IDUs a chance to stand on their own two feet and build their confidence to stay off drugs.
- Partnerships at community level with local grassroots groups and other NGOs as well as services run by local and provincial authorities can ensure better support to IDUs re-entering society. Staff from the community center provide practical support for overcoming difficulties, such as providing the documentation necessary to apply for community MMT and welfare benefits, etc. Experience has shown that without such support many IDU risk simply giving up and “falling through the cracks”.



A client visits the Daytop-run Methadone Clinic in Kunming, where former drug users also receive HIV testing and prevention and treatment information.

As a community-based organization, which applies a comprehensive approach to drug dependence and HIV infection, Daytop fills critical gaps in existing service provision, such as psychological support, peer support and outreach.

Xiao Xue's Story

35 year old Xiao Xue (not her real name) started using drugs when she was 18. She stayed at Daytop from 2000, and later worked as a staff member at the center for five years. Despite some relapses she is clean of drugs today and receives Methadone from the center next door.

Xiao Xue says it was the peer support and psychological counseling that she received at Daytop that allowed her to quit heroin. She says the most important thing was the respect she and other residents felt, which allowed her to regain her dignity and strength to find back her place in society – something she did not feel or achieve during her treatment in the compulsory detoxification center.

Hand in Hand with Government Agencies and Other NGOs

Daytop has from the beginning worked to develop close cooperation with government institutions on drug rehabilitation issues. It has continuously provided training to Public Security personnel and

government officials on how to provide effective services to IDU. It has conducted training sessions for more than 1700 people from the Public Security system (including detention facilities). Daytop also provides training and technical support to other organizations such as the Clinton Foundation and AIDS Care China, in particular through their work with government authorities on promoting harm reduction in detention centers and other closed settings.

Scaling-up Interventions

Daytop also conducts operational research in collaboration with other NGOs and academic institutions. Research includes a broad spectrum of issues relevant to drug use and HIV, such as the impact of existing policies and practice, pilot projects testing new initiatives and ideas, and ensuring a more coherent response to drug dependence and related problems (such as HIV infection among IDUs). Research partners include the Aaron Diamond Research Institute; APCASO, the Clinton Foundation, the Global Fund, the Yunnan provincial CDC and the Yunnan Provincial Public Security Department.

Daytop is providing technical assistance to other “Therapeutic Communities” and to other harm reduction projects to support the efficient scale up of harm reduction and drug rehabilitation throughout China. The experiences gained in the programme in Yunnan province may well serve to inform the development of community approaches to drug treatment and rehabilitation in other areas of China.

Further information:

Additional information on the Daytop Prevention and Recovery Centre for Drug Dependency, please contact Deputy Director Mr. Wang Xiaoguang: kmwangxiaoguang@gmail.com

Further information on HIV and drug abuse, drug treatment, and harm reduction is available at:

UNODC: <http://www.unodc.org/>

UNAIDS: <http://www.unaids.org/>

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