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Treatment and care for injecting drug users with HIV infection: a review of barriers and ways forward

Daniel Wolfe MPH ^a ... Donald Shepard PhD ^e

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Summary

We review evidence for effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and coverage of antiretroviral therapy (ART) for injecting drug users (IDUs) infected with HIV, with particular attention to low-income and middle-income countries. In these countries, nearly half (47%) of all IDUs infected with HIV are in five nations—China, Vietnam, Russia, Ukraine, and Malaysia. In all five countries, IDU access to ART is disproportionately low, and systemic and structural obstacles restrict treatment access. IDUs are 67% of cumulative HIV cases in these countries, but only 25% of those receiving ART. Integration of ART with opioid substitution and tuberculosis treatment, increased peer engagement in treatment delivery, and reform of harmful policies—including police use of drug-user registries, detention of drug users in centres offering no evidence-based treatment, and

imprisonment for possession of drugs for personal use” are needed to improve ART coverage of IDUs.



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