

Evaluation of OST: a means to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and quality

Franz Trautmann



Netherlands Institute of
Mental Health and Addiction



Use of OST evaluation

- OST programmes frequently evaluated
- Covering range from quantitative research (RCT) to qualitative research
- Serving different aims, a.o.
 - Scientific research about programme effectiveness
 - Supporting policy decision making
 - Check of effectiveness for improvement of specific OST centre
- Main focus of OST evaluations on:
 - Effectiveness of OST
 - Quality of OST programmes
 - Cost-effectiveness of OST programmes

Assessing effectiveness

- Of OST in general
 - Taking into account the treatment objectives:
 - Preventing health damage/improving health
 - Improving psycho-social functioning
 - Motivating for a change
 - Bridge to abstinence (treatment)
 - ...
- Of a certain substance
 - Compared to other substance(s)
 - Taking into account specific patient groups and treatment objectives
- On specific OST centre or individual patient level
 - Measuring effect on patients

Considerations regarding effectiveness studies

- OST (especially methadone) most frequently studied / evaluated addiction treatment
- Effectiveness in general is proven for a.o.
 - Reduction of opiate use and risk of infectious diseases
 - Prevention of overdose death
 - Reduction of drug related crime
- Effectiveness depends on a.o.
 - Dosage
 - Psycho-social care and support
 - Quality of service
- Still calls for further proof
 - Might have to be explained by the fact that OST still is controversial issue in a highly politicised / 'ideologised' debate

Considerations regarding effectiveness studies

Effectiveness of OST can be enhanced by:

- Research on effectiveness of different substances for different patient groups and objectives (RCTs, patient treatment outcome data)
- Assessing effectiveness on centre or individual patient level using a thorough patient registration/monitoring system
 - e.g. Addiction Severity Index to score patients on the different life area's at different points in time
 - Self-report ('soft' data, but perception of well-being important notion in health concept)

Considerations regarding assessing cost-effectiveness

Exact cost-effectiveness studies very difficult

- Assessing cost-effectiveness of OST requires high quality data and indicators on
 - input (financial resources, human resources, treatment interventions / services offered) and
 - output (patient numbers, treatment effect, i.e. physiological and psychosocial health, gains for society).
- Comparing OST to other forms of drug treatment requires indicators and reference standards to allow an comparison between different treatment objectives and outcomes
 - Among others to allow an assessment of the societal gains of harm reduction compared to e.g. abstinence treatment.
 - This involves not only quantifiable data (societal profits compared to the investment) but also moral judgement (abstinence versus maintenance)

Considerations regarding assessing cost-effectiveness

Other options: assess the efficiency of OST

- Financial issues
 - budget received / budget spent on staff and medication
 - financing system
 - financial control
- Management and organisational issues
 - patient numbers / staff numbers
 - staff structure
 - staff availability
 - organisation and management of the work).
- These matters not only tell something about the efficiency of OST but are intertwined with the quality of OST programmes.

Considerations regarding assessing quality

- Quality criteria include a wide variety issues:
 - Staff (quantity and quality: professions, skills, knowledge, attitude)
 - Team organisation (information exchange, cooperation)
 - Process management
 - Treatment (intake, treatment services offered)
 - Patient approach
 - Patient assessment / registration (treatment plan, monitoring treatment impact)
 - Accessibility of programme
 - Guidelines and protocols
 - Cooperation with other services
 - Patient satisfaction

Supporting policy decision making: example Slovenia & Baltic States

Focus on:

- Quality of services delivered (including patient satisfaction)
- Efficiency of OST
- Elaborated recommendations for enhancing efficiency and quality

Fine-tuning to specifics example Slovenia

- Including a chapter on rationale, aims and evidence for effectiveness of OST
- Presenting context information
 - Analysing and presenting choices made
- Including patient satisfaction
- Including force field analysis to reflect highly politicised debate / surroundings in Slovenia
- Comparing Slovenian practice against a selection of reference countries
 - 2 old (D, NL) and 2 new EU Member States (CZ, LT)

Methods

- Desk research
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Interviews with directors + staff
- Patient satisfaction interviews with patients
- Interviews with key experts from reference countries

Relevance of this type of evaluation

- Serving a mix of quantitative and qualitative information
- Functioning as thorough SWOT analysis
 - Strong points - weak points: serving indications for adapting / improving OST
 - Opportunities – threats: how to deal with threats
- Offering the possibility for a discussion among all stakeholders / supporting to find a consensus
- A means to enhance quality and efficiency

Improving Mental Health by Sharing Knowledge

**Thank you for your
attention**

Franz Trautmann
ftrautmann@trimbos.nl



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