How to improve ambulatory care of opioid-addicted patients? A pharmacoepidemiological approach assessing the value of urine drug screening tests.

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INTRODUCTION

Opioid maintenance drugs have been showed to decrease opioid use, related diseases (HIV, hepatitis C), to improve social outcomes and to decrease mortality. In France, most of opioid-addicted patients are treated by buprenorphine and managed by general practitioners (GPs). Nevertheless, the assessment of psychoactive substance use by the physician, thanks to self-reports and clinical examination, is known to underestimate the use of psychoactive substances. The implementation of urine drug screening tests should improve this assessment. These tests enable a qualitative detection of psychoactive substances in the urine.

The objective of this thesis is to assess the value of urine drug screening in opioid addicted patients managed in ambulatory care. This assessment has been conducted in three parts.

1/ To summarize the knowledge concerning drug tests in the literature and of French GPs

- We investigated French GPs' knowledge and practices concerning drug tests using a descriptive cross-sectional study by questionnaires:
-> Many French GPs treating opioid-addicted patients regularly did not perform drug tests and lacked knowledge of them


- We summarized the evidence pertaining to the efficacy of urine drug screening for medical management using a systematic review:
-> The value of urine drug screening in managing patients was not clearly indicated in these studies

Dupouy et al. Drug Alcohol Depend. 2014;136:11-20

2/ To assess effectiveness of drug tests in managing opioid-addicted patients using observational cohorts conducted from French health insurance system databases

- We assessed the effectiveness of drug tests for treatment retention in outpatients starting opioid substitution therapy using a retrospective cohort of patients starting opioid substitution treatment from the data of the French health insurance system database for the Midi-Pyrenees region:
-> Use of a drug test in follow-up of opioid substitution treatment, although rarely prescribed, significantly improved treatment retention (HR = 0,55 [CI95%: 0,38 – 0,80])


3/ To confirm the value of urine drug screening test in real life and thus, to assess their efficacy planning a pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial in general practice

- We planned a pragmatic cluster randomized controlled trial (the ESUB-MG study):
-> aiming to assess the impact of on-site urine drug screening tests in general practice compared to routine medical care on opioid maintenance treatment retention at six months in patients initiating buprenorphine
-> now funded:
  2013 national PHRC “Mental health”
  which will begin in the first semester 2015

CONCLUSION ET PERSPECTIVES

To conclude, this thesis has shown that urine drug screening tests were rarely done in France for managing opioid-addicted patients and that few studies had assessed their value. Nevertheless, drug tests seem to have a positive effect on opioid maintenance treatment retention. The on-going pragmatic randomized trial we proposed should bring sufficient level of evidence to assess effectiveness of on-site urine drug screening in general practice for patients treated by buprenorphine.