

Review of: "Mortality Risk for Individuals With Cocaine Use Disorders: Clients and Non-Clients of Public Treatment Centres for Drug Addiction"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

General Impression

This article addresses an important public health issue: the mortality risk among individuals with cocaine use disorders (CUD), comparing those who have accessed public addiction treatment services (PATS) to those who haven't. The study's focus on the Bologna region of Italy provides valuable insight into regional patterns and how health services can influence outcomes. The methodology and statistical rigor are well done, and the conclusions offer useful information for policymakers and healthcare providers.

Strengths

- **Topic relevance:** Cocaine use and its health implications are a global issue. The study's focus on CUD mortality and the role of public treatment centers (PATS) fills an important gap, especially by distinguishing between clients of PATS and non-clients.
- **Robust methodology:** The use of a large cohort (3,196 subjects) over a significant period (2009-2019) strengthens the reliability of the results. Calculating crude mortality rates (CMRs) and standardized mortality ratios (SMRs) offers a clear picture of the mortality risks faced by individuals with CUD.
- **Clear results:** The data showing that individuals who never accessed PATS had higher mortality rates underscores the need for easier access to addiction treatment services. The higher risk among women and older individuals adds a layer of detail that is useful for targeted interventions.

Areas for Improvement

- **Lack of detailed demographic information:** While the study provides basic demographic data, more detailed socioeconomic information (e.g., employment status, educational background, housing stability) would provide better context for interpreting the mortality risks.
- **Limited discussion on barriers to PATS access:** The article mentions that many individuals who never accessed PATS might not perceive their cocaine use as problematic or may face logistical barriers (e.g., stigma, geographic location). However, a deeper exploration of these barriers and potential solutions would have been valuable, especially

for policymakers.

- **Missing data on substance use patterns:** While the study includes data on the substances used at first admission, it lacks detailed information about the patterns of cocaine use (e.g., frequency, method of use, duration of addiction), which could provide more insight into the varying mortality risks.

Conclusion

This article offers a comprehensive look at the mortality risks associated with cocaine use and highlights the importance of public treatment centers in reducing these risks. The study is well-structured, with clear results that have practical implications for improving access to addiction services. However, the article could be strengthened by more in-depth exploration of the social factors influencing treatment access and more detailed substance use data.

Overall, it is a valuable contribution to the field, and the recommendations for improving PATS accessibility are well-founded and should be explored further.