



## **Lifetime Prevalence Of Deep Vein Thrombosis Among Heroin Users In Rotherham**

### **Authors**

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### **Introduction**

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a well recognised complication of femoral vein injecting of illicit drugs.

This small study sought to determine the lifetime prevalence of DVT in users who attended the local treatment services in Rotherham

### **Method**

The study was a retrospective cross-sectional study. The sample chosen were users who entered treatment with the specialist drug services in Rotherham between January 2005 and April 2005. Their casenotes were used to obtain the relevant data regarding their drug history and history of DVT.

### **Results**

Seventy two patients entered treatment during the study period.

- 58 (81%) were regular heroin injectors.
- Average heroin use 7.5 years.
- Average IV use 6.2 years.
- 15/72 had a history of DVT (20.8%)
- 34 had a history of femoral vein injecting. Of this group 14 had had a DVT (41.2%), 2 of them on more than one occasion.

### **Discussion**

The majority of the heroin users who presented for treatment in this study were using the drug intravenously (81%). The lifetime prevalence of DVT was 20.8%, a very high figure. Femoral vein injectors had a lifetime prevalence figure of 41.2% which accounted for almost all of the DVT's noted.

A DVT is associated with significant morbidity and can lead to fatal consequences such as a pulmonary embolism. Intravenous heroin use seems to be the most favoured route of administration and almost all of the DVT's noted were found in those that injected into their femoral veins. It seems that the harm minimisation message around avoiding the transition to IV drug use has failed but even more concerning is that a majority of injectors favour the use of their femoral veins. Around 2 out of every 5 of the femoral vein group will develop at least one DVT in their lifetime.

### **Conclusions**

- The majority of heroin users are now injecting the drug
- The lifetime prevalence of DVT in the whole sample was 20.8% which increased to 41.2% in those who used their femoral veins.
- This should be of major public health concern.