

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

COVID-19 Pandemic and Drug Use Disorder

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Dear Editor,

We would like to share our ideas regarding the publication, “Lessons Learned From a Pandemic: Covid-19 and Substance Use,” written by Torun and Coşkunol in 2020 (Torun & Coşkunol, 2020). In their publication, it was stated that “*Many experts suggest that the pandemic may contribute to a global rise in drug use disorders as individuals deal with the anxiety and uncertainty caused by the pandemic.*” Torun and Coşkunol (2020) also extensively discussed the limitations of hospital services and the usage of drugs corresponding to the emerging anxiety state in this situation (Torun & Coşkunol, 2020). However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the incidence of drug use disorders might also be affected by other factors. An important issue that was not mentioned by the writers is the difficulty faced in health promotion and community-active screening during the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, a legal health screening for alcohol and amphetamine use may be omitted based on the principle of avoidance of any activity that does not allow social distancing. Although community health personnel may be well-trained and equipped with COVID-19 devices for working, the

facilities/tools available might be limited because of the lockdown caused by the pandemic. For example, in our area (GPS location 13.106779457299463, 100.00527863856531), Indochina, where drug use disorders are extremely common, community screening is a local policy; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the availability of test kits for the detection of common drugs was only 10% of the target plan. This confirms that the supply of tools/facilities for the management of addiction might also become problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Author's Response:

Priorities of health system have changed, especially in the distribution of economic resources and employees (Ransing et al., 2020). Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some hospitals could not accept substance use disorder patients; partial hospital programs have adjusted their enrollment criteria, denying or delaying acceptance (Torun & Coşkunol, 2020).

Prevention services have also been heavily affected by the pandemic. The resources to be allocated for preventive services had to be used in different areas due to the pandemic. During this period, the necessary med-

ical supplies could not be provided. Although the lack of sufficient budget is an important reason for this, serious problems have been experienced in the production and supply of the products required for substance screening (Ransing et al., 2020.; Volkow, 2020).

Health workers working in preventive services have also been assigned in different places due to the pandemic. This further increased the disruption in these services. Administrators and politicians of the health system have seen combating the pandemic as the most important issue, and the issue of combating substance use disorder has lagged behind (Boehnke et al., 2020, Ransing et al., 2020).

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