Scottish Public Health Observatory
Quarterly Update
September 2019

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division provides the Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) quarterly update on a number of topic areas. Of these topics the allergy conditions, asthma, drugs and prisoners pages contain updated data.

Main Points

Allergic conditions

- Asthma continues to be the most common allergic condition, accounting for around 76% of the around 8,700 allergy-related hospital admissions from 2018/19.

Asthma

- In 2018/19, 87 people per 100,000 were hospitalised for asthma at least once during the year, continuing the decreasing trend observed in recent years.
- Males are less likely to be hospitalised for asthma than females. Since 2009/10, rates in males have shown a steady decline of 20%; in females there has been no change.
- In children under aged under 10 years, the rate of patient hospitalisations has decreased in both males (40% reduction) and females (32% reduction) since 2009/10. Rates in those aged over 10 years have remained relatively stable with a slight decrease for males and a slight increase for females over the last ten years.

Drugs

Health harm

- There were 9,377 HIV infections reported in Scotland between 1985 and 2018, of which 1,673 (18%) were among people who inject drugs.
- Of the 320 new HIV cases reported by NHS Boards in Scotland in 2018, 15 (5%) were among people who inject drugs.

Treatment for drug misuse

- A decreasing trend in the dispensing of Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) drugs (including methadone) has been evident since 2010/11. From 2010/11 to 2018/19, the number of OST items dispensed in Scotland decreased by 13%.
- The minimum number of individuals in Scotland prescribed methadone was 25,375 in 2018/19.
Prisoners

- In 2017 the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was administered to prisoners as part of the Scottish Prisoner Survey conducted by Scottish Prison Service. Among prisoners who completed the AUDIT assessment, 63% had an alcohol use disorder (66% in 2015). Just under one third (31%) were classed as possibly alcohol dependent (33% in 2015), 27% were hazardous drinkers and 6% were harmful drinkers (no change from 2015).

Background

The Scottish Public Health Observatory collaboration is co-led by ISD Scotland and NHS Health Scotland, and includes the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, National Records of Scotland, Health Protection Scotland, the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit and the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory.

The aim of the collaboration is to make public health information more accessible, to promote the reduction in inequalities and to inform health improvement in Scotland.

Issues associated with recording of the Community Health Index (CHI) number for methadone prescriptions means it is not possible to provide a robust count of the number of individuals prescribed methadone as an OST in Scotland. While the national CHI capture for methadone has increased from 64.1% in 2011/12 to 80% in 2018/19, it remains below the agreed threshold of reliability (individual analysis is usually only reported when CHI completeness is above 85-90%). As a result of this issue, methadone patient estimates are described as a ‘minimum number’ of individuals prescribed methadone hydrochloride 1mg/ml solution.

Due to other data completeness issues, information on the costs of methadone prescribing has not been included in the updated OST prescribing statistics. A revised version of the OST prescribing statistics, including estimated costs, will be published as part of the December 2019 update of the ScotPHO drug pages.

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Further Information

All the topic areas updated will be available on the ScotPHO website.

The next release of this publication will be December 2019.

ISD and Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further information about our statistics.