

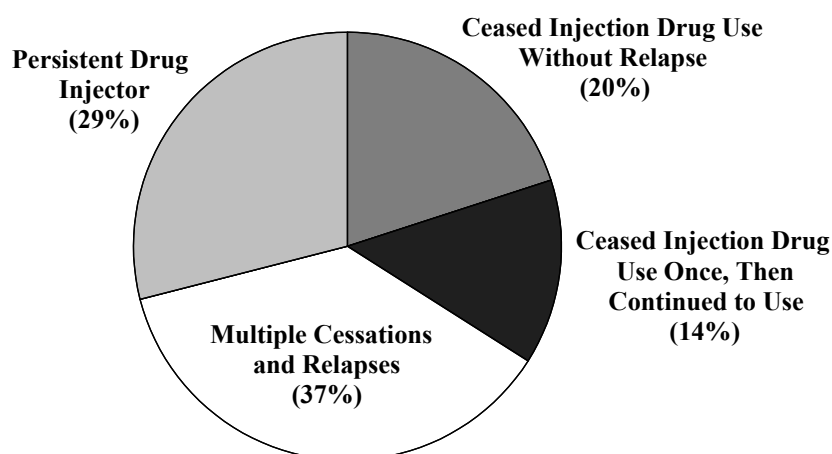
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Study Finds Only 20% of Street-Recruited Injection Drug Users in Baltimore Cease Injection Drug Use Without Relapse

Few injection drug users (IDUs) are successful in completely stopping their use of injection drug use, according to the AIDS Link to Intravenous Experience (ALIVE) Study in Baltimore, Maryland. While the majority (71%) of injection drug users did experience some period of abstinence during the course of the 12-year study, only 20% stopped their injection drug use without relapsing. Of the remaining participants, 29% remained persistent injectors, 14% ceased injection drug use once and then continued to use injection drugs regularly, and 37% had numerous cessations and relapses during the duration of the study. Only a minority of the IDUs received treatment while participating in the study, despite the fact that referrals were regularly made to drug treatment programs that waived the waiting list. The authors conclude, "The long-term injection patterns described in this study are consistent with the view of drug addiction as a chronic disease," thus emphasizing the "need for prolonged ongoing programs to sustain cessation efforts by injection drug users, and at the same time provide harm-reduction counseling and medical care to those who continue injecting either intermittently or continuously, to prevent adverse health and social outcomes" (p. 704).

Injection Drug Use Among Street-Recruited IDUs Interviewed Twice a Year from 1988 to 2000, Baltimore, Maryland (N = 1,339)



NOTES: Active injection drug users in Baltimore, Maryland, were recruited in 1988 through community outreach efforts. Participants were interviewed about their drug injection and other behaviors twice a year from 1988 to 2000. The data presented are from those participants who made at least four follow-up visits and did not have more than one large gap between follow-up visits (1,339 of the original 2,946 IDUs recruited into the ALIVE study).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Galai N., Safaeian M., Vlahov D., Bolotin A., and Celentano D.D., "Longitudinal Patterns of Drug Injection Behavior in the ALIVE Study Cohort, 1988-2000: Description and Determinants," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 158(7):695-704, 2003. For more information contact Dr. Noya Galai at ngalai@jhsph.edu.

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