

Where do all the syringes come from?

Pharmacy contribution to needle and syringe distribution in Hanoi, Vietnam

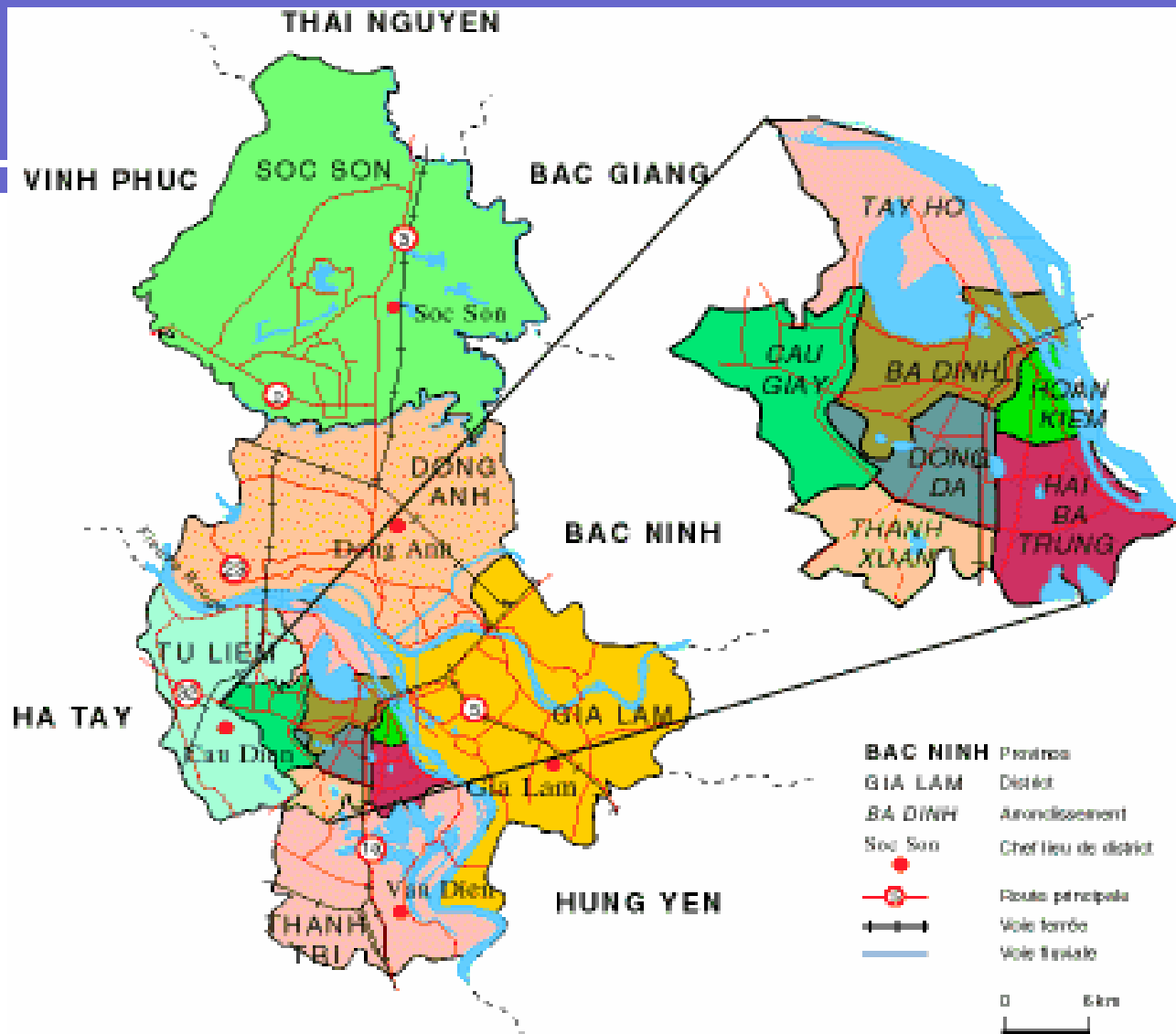
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Study Objective

- The purpose of this pilot study was to explore the role of private pharmacies in providing sterile syringes to injecting drug users (IDUs) in Hanoi

Setting



Source: www.angelfire.com/co/hongnam/vnmap/hanoi.html

Setting



Methods

- 5 pharmacies recorded daily distribution of syringes to IDUs for one week
- A total of 14 PEs at two existing NSPs recorded weekly number of syringes distributed
- Interview of each participating pharmacist seeking to gain the pharmacists' perspective into the practice of selling syringes and desire to participate in HIV prevention

Results- Interviews

Knowledge of NSPs and Peer Educators

- Lack of details regarding NSPs and peer educators and none of the five pharmacists indicated that peer educators worked within their districts
 - *If I were a policy-maker I would let the community form a group to clean up syringes (Pharmacist #2).*

Results- Interviews

Reasons why they sell syringes to IDUs

- Strong sense of professional responsibility to provide syringes to IDUs with a willingness to provide health education when possible
 - *I sell to IDUs to contribute to the health of the community and to help in HIV prevention among the community (Pharmacist #5).*
- Some hesitate to sell to IDUs
 - *first duty is to sell medicine, but my second duty is to prevent the spread of HIV (Pharmacist #4)*

Results- Interviews

Interest in providing educational material to IDUs

- Each pharmacist expressed a willingness to provide health education information (brochures and pamphlets)
- Four pharmacists indicated they already provide IDUs with verbal health education whenever they have the chance
- Consensus that the transaction is too quick to provide detailed health education
 - *I think the transaction is too quick with no time to give information to IDUs, but I am always ready and willing to provide information (Pharmacist #4).*

Results- Interviews

Discussing HIV prevention with other pharmacists

- Only 1 pharmacist reported rarely discussing HIV prevention with other pharmacists
- There does appear to be a wider informal network of pharmacists in Hanoi willing to discuss HIV prevention

*There are many pharmacists interested in HIV prevention
(Pharmacist #3)*

Results- Interviews

Interest in providing ARV treatment

- Each pharmacist said that ARV treatment should be given at hospital not at pharmacies

ARV should be provided only through hospitals and is not the responsibility of pharmacies (Pharmacist #2).

Results

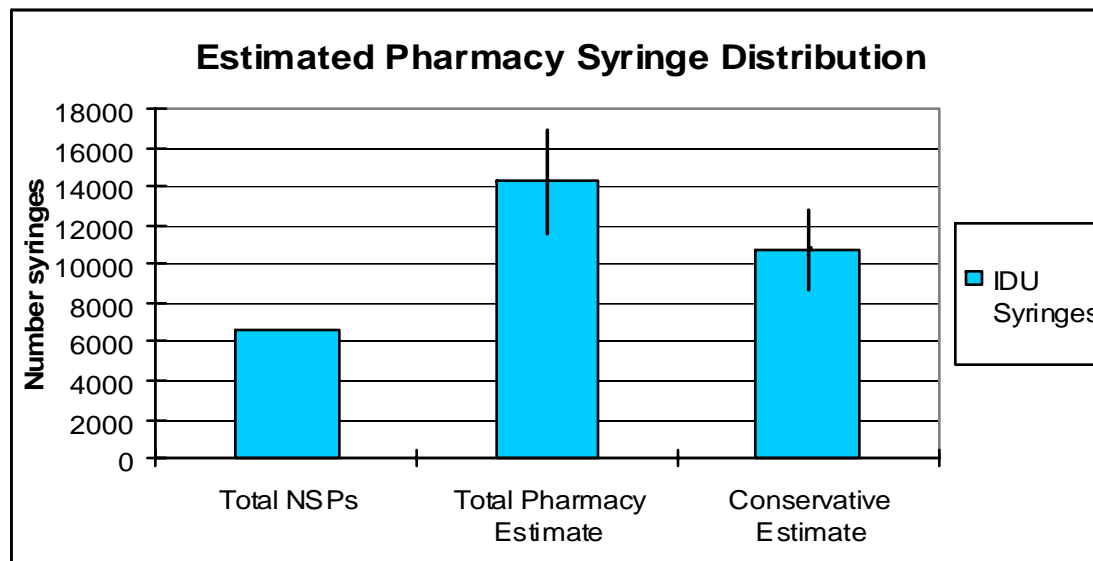
Table 1: Pharmacy and NSP syringe distribution during study week

	# Contacts	Total syringes	IDU syringes	Syringes Collected
Pharmacy 1	46	101	92	0
Pharmacy 2	103	143	143	0
Pharmacy 3	53	88	88	0
Pharmacy 4	32	218	73	0
Pharmacy 5	56	105	69	0
NSP-Dong Da	811	4579	4579	2018
NSP-Thanh Xuan	433	2003	2003	1165
Totals	1534	7237	7047	3183

*pharmacies 1-3 located in Dong Da, pharmacies 4 & 5 located in Thanh Xuan

Results

Figure 1: Estimates based on collected data from 5 pharmacies compared to observed NSP distribution, syringes per week



- Estimates based on total estimated number of pharmacies willing to sell syringes to IDUs selling the observed avg. per week
 - Estimated collectively by peer educators in each district (50% in Dong Da; 75% in Thanh Xuan) – 153 pharmacies

Conclusions

- Pharmacies in Hanoi play an active role in HIV prevention among IDUs and alongside peer educators could contribute to a comprehensive HIV prevention program
- We suggest Vietnamese pharmacies be provided with support to broaden their harm reduction activities, such as providing health education brochures and posters as a means of scaling-up harm reduction in Vietnam.
- Further study is required to identify the numbers of willing pharmacists as well as the efficacy of including pharmacies in a harm reduction program.

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