Increasing systematic and proportionate research access to the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) could improve its public value



Using a National, Interdisciplinary Team to Enhance Drug and alcohol treatment data (UNITED)

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Background

NDTMS is England's publicly funded structured drug and alcohol treatment dataset held by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). Working with Change Grow Live, Turning Point, and people with lived/living experience, the UNITED study aims to identify strategies to optimise NDTMS and improve measurement and reporting of drug and alcohol treatment data.

Results

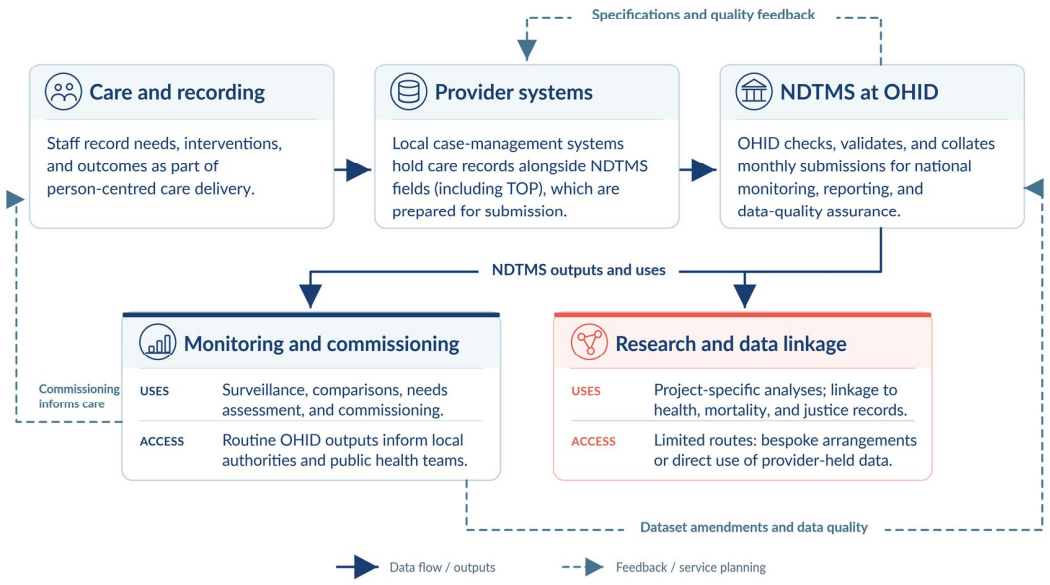


Figure 1. NDTMS data processes

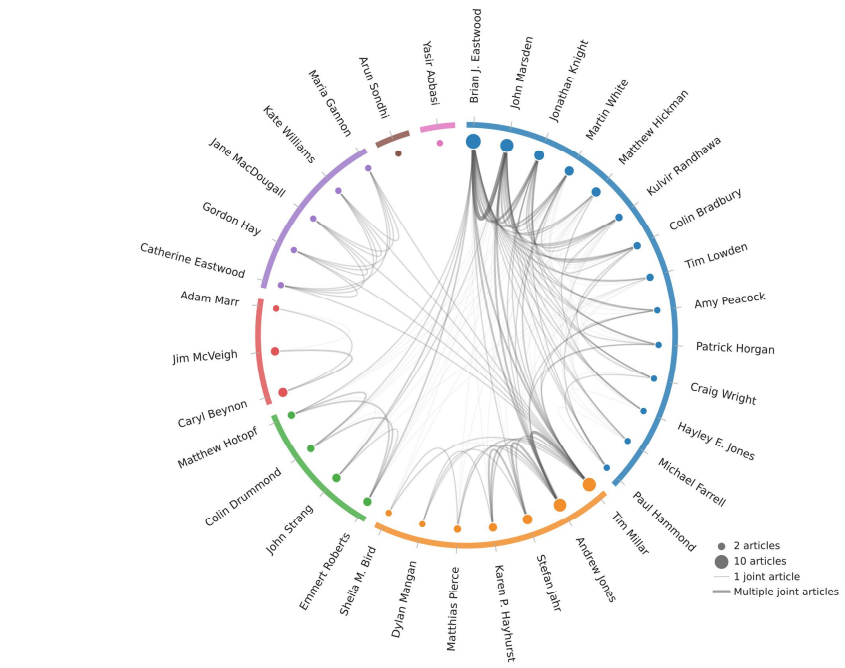


Figure 2. Recurrent author collaborations

Table 1. NDTMS value, functions, uses and limitations

Why NDTMS exists	What NDTMS does	What NDTMS supports	Limitations
Understand needs & outcomes	Monitoring & surveillance	Commissioning & funding	Captures structured treatment only
Support care provision	Regional and national comparisons	Standardising care	Variation: quality & completion
Large-scale dataset	Data linkage	Routine and non-routine analysis	Restricted researcher access

Organisations should be assessing the needs of individuals and NDTMS provides a framework for that ... it encourages some consistency. Staff 4

I would like to think that it's [data] used to make the service better. Client 8

...wanting to record specific data, it sort of (...) has removed the human element [out of client interactions]. Staff 4

I think there will be a lot of staff, under time pressures, [who] will just tick anything (...) to make the box go away and it loses the whole value and purpose. Staff 1

More people should be able to easily access that information and they should be able to access it more completely. Staff 3

Figure 3. Illustrative quotations

We found disconnections between the views of clients, frontline staff, treatment provider organisations, OHID and local authority on:

1) How, why and what data is collected and entered into NDTMS; and
2) How that data can be used and linked to other datasets.

Methods

Scoping Review Preprint

Team science

We built capacity through a new multidisciplinary team from across England with a common goal of improving drug and alcohol treatment, with third sector involvement, structured team development, and early- and mid-career researcher leadership.

Scoping review

83 NDTMS-based studies (45 journal articles, 34 governmental outputs, & four doctoral theses) published from 2005 onwards were identified using Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology. Limitation: identified outputs may not reflect individual or independent studies or cohorts.

Qualitative study

32 interviews with staff and people in treatment, and four in-service observations in Southwest, Northeast and London to understand value, impact and NDTMS improvements. Limitation: no interviews with researchers unable to access NDTMS.

Funded by NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

This study/project is funded by the NIHR Team Science Award (NIHR306655). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR, the NHS or the Department of Health and Social Care.
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.