Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST)

Distance Learning Programme

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Background

India has a sizable population of people affected by opioid dependence. Many of opioid dependent people use drugs through injecting route, which makes them vulnerable for both acquisition as well as transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection in India. NACO has initiated and scaled-up a number of HIV prevention interventions specific to People Who Inject Drugs ('Targeted Interventions' – TIs) that includes needle syringe exchange programme (NSEP) and other outreach-based services. OST is one such intervention, aimed at prevention of HIV among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) in India. OST is an evidence-based strategy for treatment of opioid dependence. This treatment involves provision of long-acting opioid agonist medications (like Buprenorphine) to opioid dependent PWID under medical supervision. This enables them to stay off drugs and injections (and thereby markedly reduce their risk of HIV infection) as well as helps them regain socio-occupational productivity and an enhanced quality of life. NACO plans to substantially scale-up the OST services throughout the country. These services are offered at OST centres located at various government hospitals where a dedicated team of doctor, nurse, and counsellor provides clinical services, while a data manager assists in OST-related record maintenance. These OST centres function in close linkages and collaboration with the NGO providing outreach services (targeted interventions) to the target population.

Aims & Objectives

Capacity building of the staff at OST centres is an important challenge in the scale-up of the programme in India. At present, the programme mandates a five day induction training program and a three day annual refresher program for the staff. Some of the challenges in imparting training include limited availability of trained faculty, variability in the standard of the training imparted and delays between recruitment of staff and the induction training.

Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) distance learning programme has been developed for building the capacities of service providers engaged in delivery of Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST). This distance learning program is targeted towards the personnel working in OST centres supported by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The online training programme is a joint endeavour of National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi and Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), New Delhi.

The online training programme will address the aforementioned challenges through a standardized training platform where the newly recruited staff will undergo training from their place of work/home according to their convenience. The training currently is not envisaged to replace classroom trainings, but to enable the participants to acquaint themselves with the various aspects of OST till such time they get an opportunity to attend the formal classroom trainings.

Course design and duration

The online training course is divided into seven modules, with each module divided into chapters. The modules deliver the course content in a rich, interactive audio-visual format. The modules use slides with text and graphics along with voice-overs for an interactive delivery of the contents. In some sessions, videos have been added to enhance the learning experience of the participants.

Scope for self-evaluation has been provided in the course through questions placed within each chapter to help the participant refresh the important points covered during the course module. Concurrent evaluations have been used to guide the understanding and learning of the participants as they move through the course.

Candidates will attempt a mandatory set of ten multiple-choice-based questions before they proceed to the next module. A minimum pass score of 90% has been set for each module, if the scores in any particular set falls below the minimum score, participants will be provided opportunity to revisit the module and attempt the evaluation again before proceeding to the next module.

The participants will undergo an online end-of-course examination prior to course completion. Candidates who successfully clear the end-of-course examination will be able to download their course completion certificates.

Each chapter is expected to take about 20 – 30 minutes. The participants can stop/pause their sessions at any point of time, and can restart from where they had left. The participants are encouraged to complete the training programme within 7 – 10 days by dedicating 1 – 2 hours daily on the training programme.

Eligibility Criteria

Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) distance learning programme has been developed for building the capacities of service providers engaged in delivery of Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST). At present, enrolment to the course is by invite only.

Course Content

- **Module one:** The first module contains three chapters that provide an introduction to various psychoactive substances, their categorization and psychological effects, detailed discussion of various types of opioids, various terminologies associated with drug use and drug use disorders, as well as vulnerabilities associated with drug use.
- **Module two**: The second module contains three chapters that discuss various harms related to drug use, strategies available to deal with drug use problems and description of NACO's harm reduction programmes for IDUs.
- **Module three:** The third module contains two chapters on assessment and diagnosis. An initial overview of interviewing techniques and areas of assessment is provided followed by case-vignette based role-play on assessment and diagnosis.
- **Module four:** The fourth module contains one chapter that provides an understanding of the concept and rationale of OST.
- **Module five:** The fifth module contains three chapters on OST. The first chapter explains the pharmacology of buprenorphine and its clinical relevance. The second chapter provides a step-by-step guideline on how to provide OST to a client, including selection criteria, contraindications for OST, and various phases of OST. The third chapter discusses common clinical situations encountered during OST, as well as special clinical situations such as adolescence, pregnancy, and medical co-morbidities.

- **Module six:** The sixth module contains three chapters related to psychosocial interventions to be provided as part of OST package. The first chapter contains basic issues related to psychosocial interventions and demonstration video on psycho-education. Chapter two and three contain theoretical aspects and demonstration of Motivation Enhancement Therapy and Relapse Prevention Therapy respectively.
- **Module seven:** The final module deals with programmatic aspects of OST, and is divided into six chapters. These chapters deal with OST programme management as applicable to NACO-supported OST centres, including NACO OST scheme, staff roles and responsibilities, client flow, record maintenance and referral and networking.

User Guide

The minimum system requirements for running the online training programme are:

- A desktop computer/laptop with Windows XP/7/8,

- 1 GB DDR RAM,

- Functional audio system

- Web-browser: Internet explorer (version 5 and above) / Google Chrome / Mozilla Firefox (version 30 and above)

- Internet connectivity with minimum speed of 256 kbps

Participants will need to complete an online registration form to enrol in the course.

The candidate would be required to upload scanned relevant proof-documents (proof of current employment; a photo ID proof; proof of educational qualification) to complete the registration process. Login-Id and password for the online programme will be shared with the participants after verification of the uploaded documents.

Each enrolled participant would be required to complete a pre and a post training assessment form. Certificate of completion will be awarded to the participants upon completion of the course. This certificate would enable the participant to start delivery of OST services at their centres.

Course Coordinator

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