



centre for addictology

PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC
1st MEDICAL FACULTY
CHARLES UNIVERSITY
PRAGUE

RUS-IDU: Seroprevalence of blood-borne diseases in Russian speaking IDUs related to semiopen drug scene in Prague

Tomas Zabransky¹, Bara Janikova¹, Viktor Mravcik², Vratislav Rehak³

¹Centre for Addictology

²Czech National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addiction

³Remedis, Private Hepatologic Ambulance



Structure of the presentation

- The broader motivation for the study
- Design
- Ethical Aspects
- Sampling
- Main results
- Sociodemography of probands
- Drugs use patterns
- Risky behaviour/s
- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements



Motivation for the study

- Motivation: qualitative data from Focus Groups with LT services workers about increased presence of Russian speakers in Prague drug scene
- Aim: to learn about this population as much as possible





Goals of the study

- To study the prevalence of serologic and virologic markers of BBDs in the study sample
- To gather sociodemographic, epidemiologic and behavioural data about the RUS-IDUs
- To analyse predictors of seropositivity
- To analyse risk behaviour for transmission of the infections to outer (autochthonous) population

© Jan Šibík, 2004
(infectious hospital in
Odessa, Ukraine)





Criteria

- Inclusion

- 15 years +
- Russian as a first or second language
- Citizens of ex-USSR countries
- Injecting drug use in Prague within last month
- Approached by researchers directly or through RDS

- Exclusion

- Citizens of other than the 12 ex-USSR countries
- Citizens of those 12 countries, but never lived there
- Not speaking Russian, or
- Are not able to understand the questions posed (e.g. stoned)
- Never used drugs in CZ, or
- Do not have RDS card





Sampling issues

- The Respondent Driven Sampling has shown not to work properly in population that is extremely hidden – the incentives were not able to break mistrust in people coming from countries where drug use is a crime and drug users are marginalised extremely
- After 3 waves of RDS (which is not enough) we switched into a combination of snowball sampling and exhaustive sampling
- We ceased the study once the potential of the scene was exhausted obviously
- Altogether 59 probands in the sample



Main results

variable	RUS-IDU	CZ-IDU	Ratio RUS-IDU ----- CZ-IDU	IDUs @ Ukraine	IDUs in Russian Federation
HIV+	3,4 %	0,2%	17	15 – 45 %	30 – 50 %
anti-HCV	83 %	35 % (Praha 45 %)	2,4	70 – 90 %	70 – 95 %
HCV-PCR	66 %	?	(3-4) ?	?	?
anti-HBc	53,5 %	5,6 %	9,6	20 – 50 %	15 – 60%

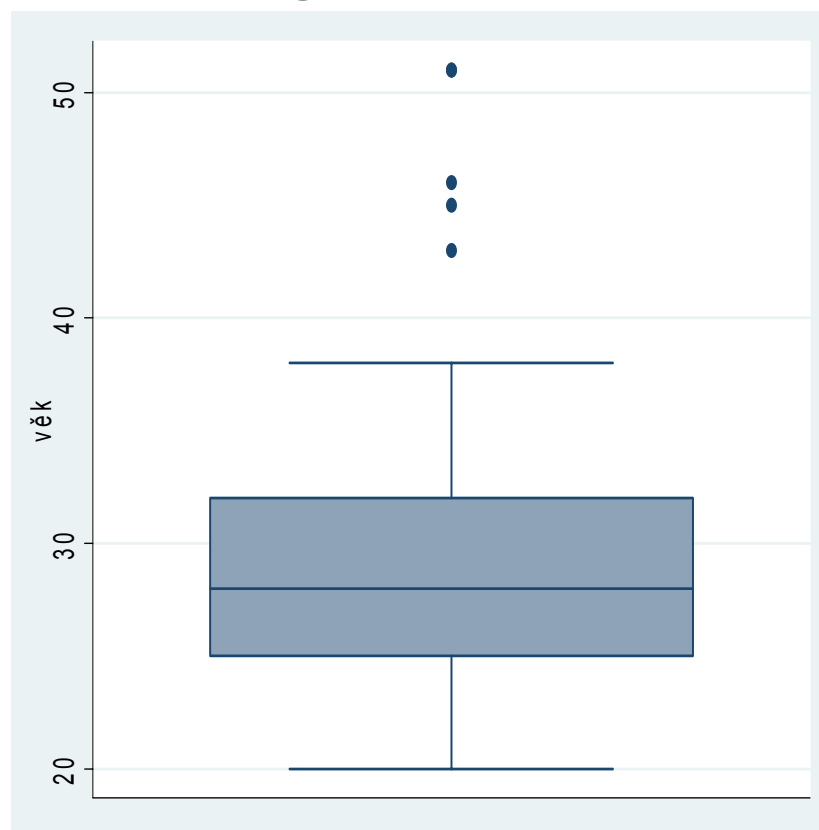
BUT: The sample size is rather small and results should be seen as „significant“ only



Sociodemography

- 59 probands altogether, mean age 29.6 (SD 7.03), 2 female (Ukrainians, 20 and 51 years old)
- Of the sample
 - 30% reside in CZ < 2 years,
 - 17% 3-4 years,
 - 22% 5-6 years,
 - 17% 7-8 years,
 - 21% > 8 years

The age of probands





Nationality

Nationality	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Ukrainian	19	32.20	32.20
Georgian	13	22.03	54.24
Russian	10	16.95	71.19
Belarusian	8	13.56	84.75
Armenian	4	6.78	91.53
Chechen	2	3.39	94.92
Dagestani	1	1.69	96.61
Moldavian	1	1.69	98.31
Tatarian	1	1.69	100.00
Total	59	100.00	



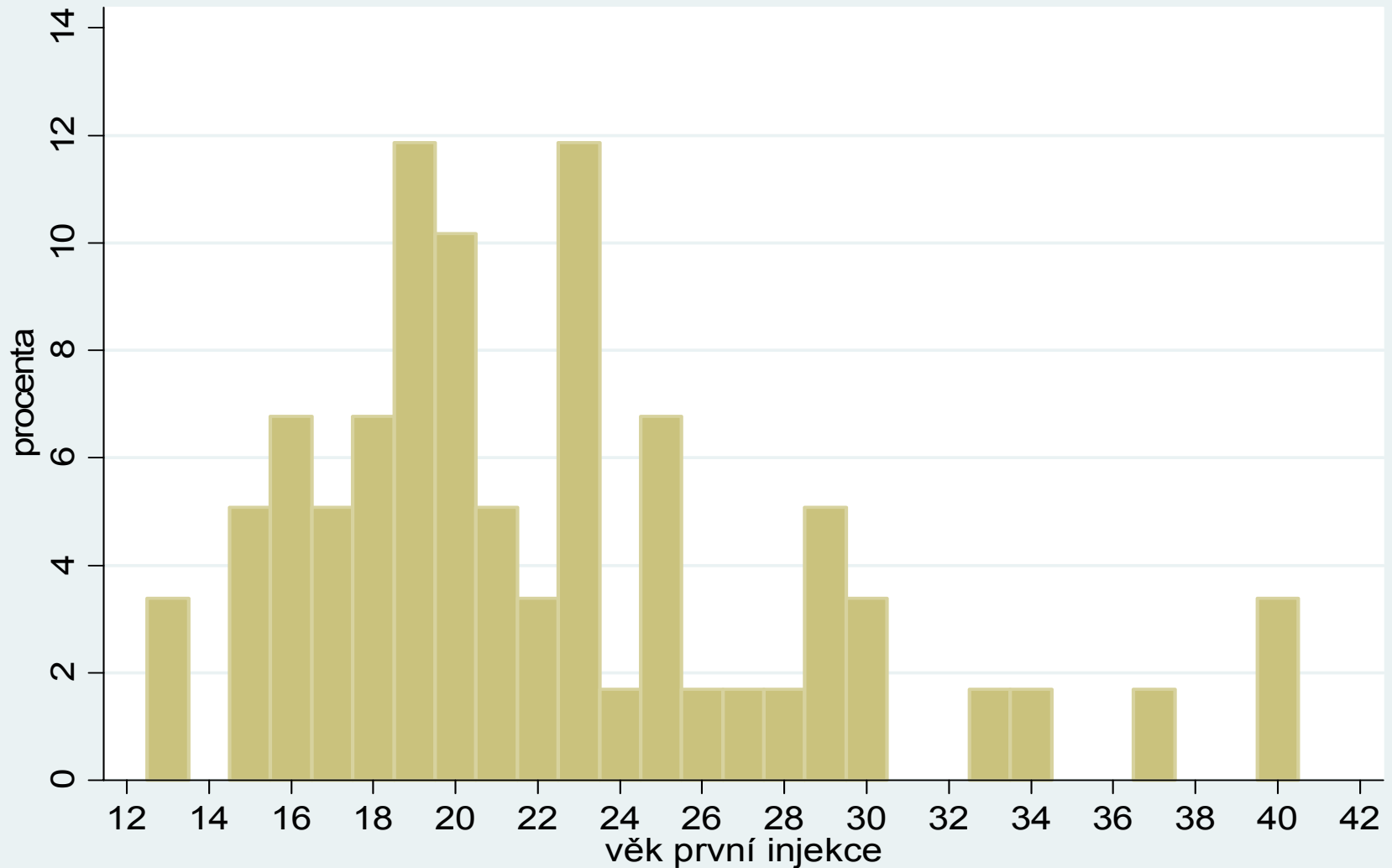
Drug history

- Mean duration of any illegal drug use : 94 (SD: 72) months (almost eight years); medium duration: six years
- Mean duration of injecting drug use 49 (SD: 34) months (over 4 years), medium duration: 48 months (4 years).
- Injecting before arrival to CZ: 67%
 - heroin: 30,5%; shirka (acetylated opium): 39%; heroin AND shirka: 12%
 - ATS: 15%; buprenorphine: 7%; cocaine and methadone: 4% each

main source of paraphernalia in ex-CCCP	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
pharmacy	30	50.85	50.85
„other“ source	21	35.59	86.44
Drug using friends	4	6.78	93.22
dealer	2	3.39	96.61
NEPs	2	3.39	100.00
Total	59	100.00	



The age of first injection in the sample





Drugs use in last month

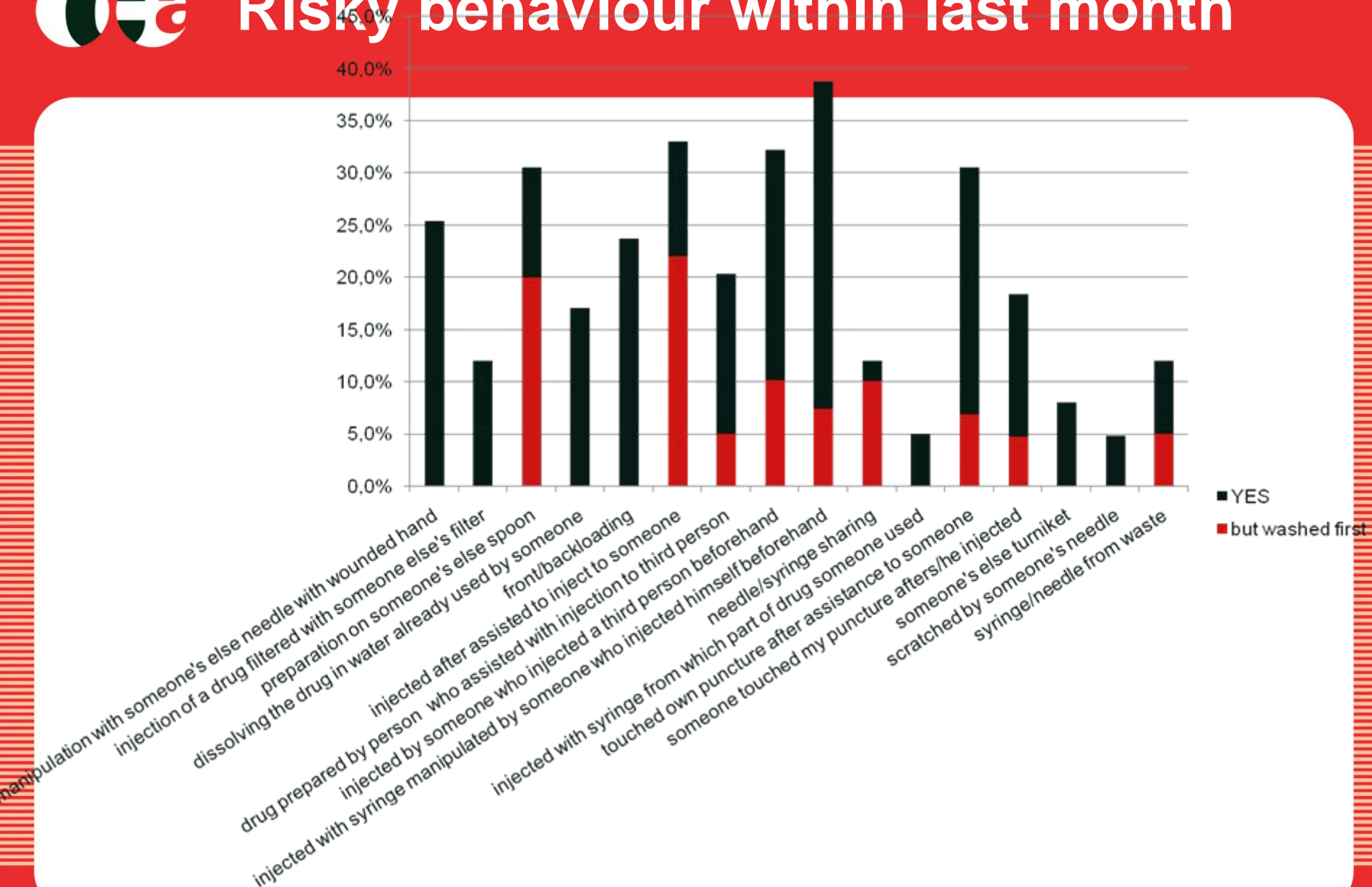
- Heroin: 39%
- Buprenorphine: 59%
- Heroin and bup'ine: 32%
- Bup'ine with other drug in one injection: 4 cases, 3x with methamphetamine (2x „I am always using the czech speedball“)
- **Meth (pervitin) alone or combined with other drug/s: 77%**
- 1x cocaine, 1x Rivotril®



Forget the archetype of „hippie / alcopunk junkie“ – our sample took care for their appearance



Risky behaviour within last month





Risky behaviour: summary

- Classical sharing of paraphernalia surprisingly lower than in autochthonous IDUs
- But secondary sharing (water, front- and backloading, using paraphernalia that were not used for injection, but manipulated / handed over by someone who just injected, etc.) very high
- And, the extent of risky sexual behaviour is VERY high



Risky sexual behaviour

- In last month, unprotected
 - Vaginal sex: 39%
 - Anal sex: 5% (at 3 and more occasions)
 - Oral sex: 25%
- During the stay in CZ
 - 70% report exclusively or „almost exclusively“ unprotected sexual activities
 - 35% report sex for money „often“ and „sometimes“
 - Sex for money and almost/exclusively unprotected sex: 22% of the sample





Statistically significant predictors of seropositivity

- Anti-HBc
 - Any drug use in countries of origin (OR=3.5)
- HCV-PCR+:
 - Injecting drug use in countries of origin (OR=4.25)
- Anti-HIV relatively low, thus unfeasible for analyses
- Anti HBC AND Anti-HCV
 - Injecting drug use in countries of origin (OR=3.06)
 - Reported needle sharing in countries of origin (OR=5.7)
- anti-HBc AND HCV PCR+
 - Reported needle sharing in countries of origin (OR=8.18)



Conclusions

- In the drug scene in Prague resides a group of Russian speakers who
 - Seem to have substantially higher HIV prevalence than the CZ average in IDUs
 - Display extremely high anti-HCV prevalence and active VHC
 - Frequently engage into extremely risky sexual behaviour and risky (secondary) injecting behaviour
 - Have a history of drug use in countries of origin (high seroprevalence countries)
 - Use drugs together with autochthonous users



Conclusions II

- In vast majority (90%), Russian speaking IDUs have no health insurance and substantial part of them are illegal immigrants
- Drug using groups are rather isolated (protective strategy against draconic repression and blackmailing brought from their countries of origin)
- Injecting to other places (vena jugularis, femoralis, basilica) than usual in CZ (vena mediana cubiti)
- Very little or no information about risks of BBDs
- Many went through refugee camps, but hid their drug use
- **This marginalised group needs special, matched services, that are subject of sensitive political decision/s**



Next steps

- Broadening of the study scope to other minorities (Vietnamese, first of all) and other major cities
- Staying Safe: study into protective strategies of IDUs
- Planning interventions / targeted services
 - Would be happy to share experiences with countries of longer histories of care for immigrant drug users



Special thanx to

- Svetlana Golubieva, Alexander Memey, Natalia Ustinova – native speaking field researchers
- Jaroslav Jedlička, MD, PhD. – consultations



Acknowledgements

- **Funders**

- Prague Municipality

and

- National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addictions / National Drug Commission

- **Collaborators**

- Low threshold programs of Sananim, NGO, and other NGOs in Prague
 - National Program on HIV Prevention
 - National Reference Laboratory on HIV/AIDS
 - National Reference Laboratory on viral hepatitis



Thank you for your attention!



twz@adiktologie.cz

mravcik.viktor@vlada.cz