

# Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) in the Republic of Belarus: History and Experience

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# DRUG CONSUMPTION IN BELARUS: BACKGROUND

BELARUS IS A NEW INDEPENDENT STATE (FORMED IN 1991)  
POPULATION: 9.3 MILLION

CURRENTLY, 7 300 PEOPLE WERE REGISTERS WITH DRUG DEPENDENCE DIAGNOSED

DRUG ADDICTION IMPOSES SERIOUS SOCIAL AND HEALTH PROBLEMS TO INDIVIDUAL AND HIGH ECONOMIC COSTS TO THE COUNTRY:

- 80% of drug dependent people are aged 18 to 40 years
- Over 50% are neither involved in education nor have regular employment
- Over 70% are not formally married
- Over 63% were sued for criminal offence, including more than once
- HIV infection and other drug-related health effects are common



# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS: SET-UP AND DEVELOPMENT

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 – “Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Belarus” project started, financed by the Global Fund against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria

2009 – The OST approach was approved by the Board of the Ministry of Health of Belarus for introduction in healthcare institutions for opioid dependent patients

2021 – use of Buprenorphine in tablet form for OST started (Buprenorphine was included into the National List of Approved Pharmaceuticals)

August 20<sup>th</sup> 2021 – Instruction No 98 “Treatment of Opioid Dependent Patients” was issued by Ministry of Health. The most disciplined OST patients were allowed to take a stock of opioid antagonists home, on approval of the physician

2023 – Amendments to the Instruction No 98 approved. Several OST Programme exclusion criteria cancelled.



# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS: THE OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Provision of qualified and comprehensive medical aid to patients suffering from drug dependence
- ❖ Wider involvement of HIV infected patients into antiretroviral therapy, stimulation of the adherence to it, prevention of spread of other socially threatening diseases among the drug dependent individuals
- ❖ Provision of social assistance to drug dependent people (long term job search, improvement of family relationship etc.), with final objective of their social re-integration
- ❖ Prevention of lethal overdose cases with the illicit drugs among the dependent opioid users
- ❖ Overall reduction of latent drug circulation, consumption and addiction levels in Belarus



# OST ADMINISTERING SITES IN BELARUS: NUMBER AND GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD



***20 OST sites in Belarus***



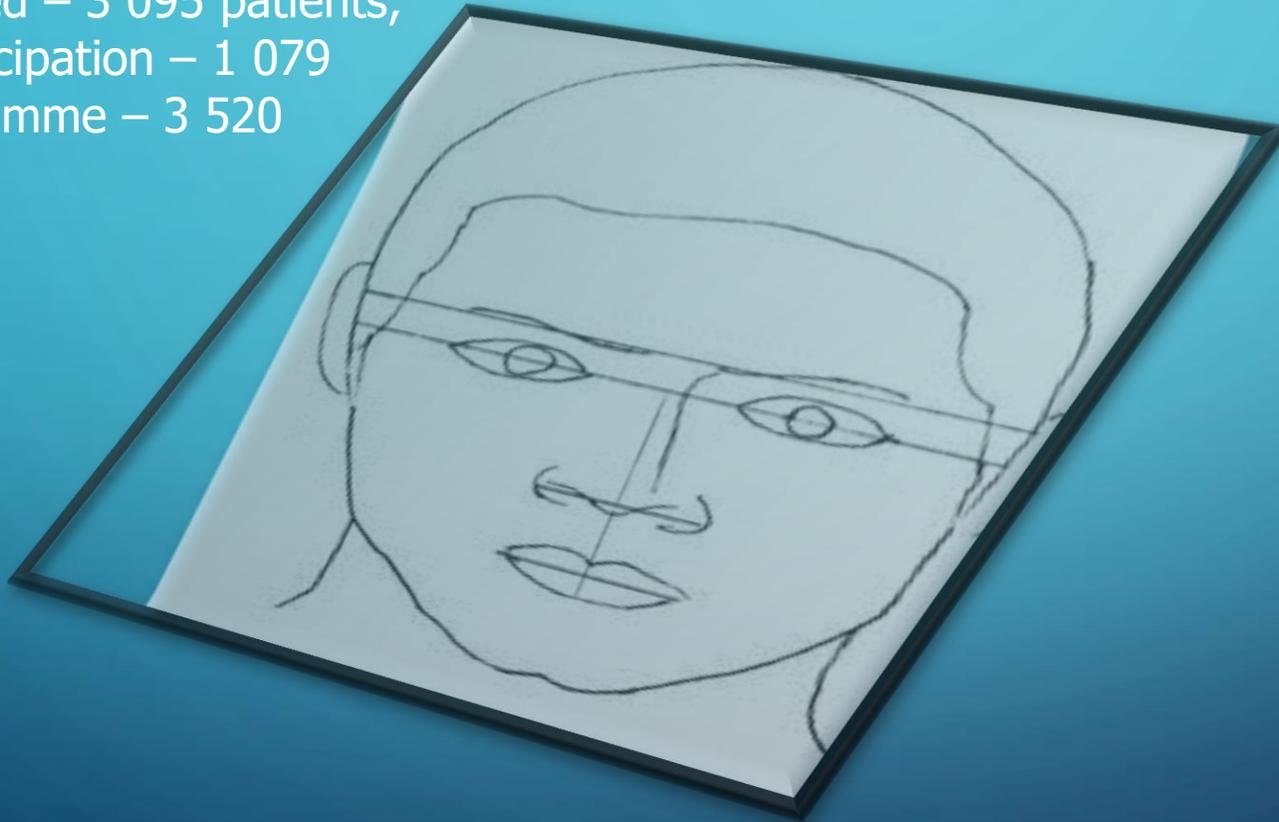
# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS



# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS. OUTCOMES: PARTICIPATION AND PATIENT PROFILE

## OVER THE ENTIRE PROGRAMME PERIOD:

initially enrolled – 3 095 patients,  
renewed participation – 1 079  
left the programme – 3 520



**PROFILE OF THE PATIENT:**  
78% males, 22% females  
Major age group: 25-45 years  
40% participants HIV infected



# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS. OUTCOMES AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

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**15%** of people with registered diagnosis of opioid dependence are involved in the OST Programme

**59,1%** of Programme participants have regular employment

**93,0%** of HIV infected participants adhere to antiretroviral therapy

**29,3%** participants are formally married

The above indicators for the participants are generally higher than those for drug dependent people not involved in the OST Programme



# OST PROGRAMME IN BELARUS: OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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474 patients left the programme on achievement of stable remission

36 children were born by women in the OST Programme

The OST Programme is strengthened by the Social Support Project (will be presented separately)

63,0% of participants improved their life quality (results of the 2021 survey)

