

Joint Event

## 42<sup>nd</sup> World Cancer Conference

12<sup>th</sup> World congress on

Addictive Disorders & Addiction Therapy

13<sup>th</sup> International Conference & Exhibition on

Physiotherapy, Physical Rehabilitation and  
Sports Medicine

July 17-18, 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Gen Med 2023, Volume 11

### **Exposing harmful narratives of violence and stigma against women who use drugs and treatment needs of women who use drugs in Nigeria**

**Nsidibe Essien**

Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse, Nigeria

Substance use by women has been under-researched particularly, the nature of violence and stigma faced by females who use drugs in developing countries. This study draws on qualitative research in Nigeria, to explore how gender-based violence and stigmas around social identity categories (e.g. gender, sex work) shape drug use and contribute to treatment needs for marginalised women from deprived backgrounds in Nigeria. Qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews with street-involved female substance users and transcribed, coded and analysed thematically. 162 female drug users were selected from Akwa Ibom, Enugu and Lagos States. Initiation of substance use was influenced by partner's use and social networks while the prevalence of stigma and sexual violence was reported by young females who use drugs and sell sex. Purchase of drugs at night was associated with a heightened risk of sexual violence, perpetrated by male users. Recreational use of prescriptive opioids such as tramadol and heroin overlapped with sex work, thereby increasing the risk of violence. Stigma against female drug users does not exist in isolation as it makes it difficult for them to access treatment services. They internalise stigma and develop a stigmatising identity that negatively impacts on their treatment-seeking. Reported abandonment of treatment was associated with low quality of services. The need to combat stigma through interventions that seek to improve gender relations, living conditions and access to treatment services for marginalised women who use drugs is important and will facilitate a reduction in health problems associated with women who use drugs.