

# Methadone's hospital toll revealed

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Thousands of vulnerable drug addicts have ended up in hospital after overdosing on the very treatment prescribed by the NHS to help them, it has emerged.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed there have been 4479 hospital admissions caused by methadone since records began in the mid-1990s.

Last year alone 222 users were rushed to hospital after overdosing on the heroin-replacement substance.

The party's public health spokeswoman, Annie Wells, said the official statistics proved the need to find better ways to treat heroin addicts.

She has long called for alternative treatments for users in Scotland, rather than parking them on a substance like methadone which offers no real hope of recovery.

In contrast, the SNP government simply wants to make it even easier for addicts to take heroin, with the bid to set up NHS-run injecting facilities.

The figures on methadone-related hospital admissions, which were buried in the depths of ISD Scotland data files, show no improvement in reducing these figures since they were first gathered in 1996.

## **Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:**

"Methadone is meant to help heroin addicts – but now we learn it has hospitalised thousands in recent years.

"It's a disgrace that the system is so utterly dependent on parking vulnerable addicts on this dangerous substance when what they need is actual help.

"We need to remember that the vast majority of these people want to give up drugs altogether.

"But all they get is an SNP government which either feeds them methadone with no other alternative considered, or allows them to inject the ruinous heroin for free at a state-run facility.

"That's unimaginative, and will only worsen Scotland's already shocking drug problem.

"It's time to see efforts going into changing the lives of heroin addicts for good, not making things worse for them."