**Injecting drug use among inmates in Norwegian prisons**

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**Background:** People who inject drugs (PWID) have several barriers to antiviral treatment for chronic hepatitis C (CHC). Treatment during incarceration may be a way of overcoming some of these barriers. In 2014 the number of persons starting prison terms in Norway was 6,576 of which around 40% would serve more than 90 days in prison. About 40-50% of PWID in Norway have CHC. The present study aims at exploring injecting drug use (IDU) among prisoners in Norway lifetime, last six months before incarceration, and during incarceration.

**Methods:** The study was based on results from a large survey on mental health and substance abuse in Norwegian prisons performed 2013 and 2014. Of a total of 63 prison units in Norway, prisoners from 57 units participated in the survey. Inmates were recruited based on the availability and willingness to participate.

**Results:** Of 1499 participating prisoners (males 93%), 431 (29%) reported IDU lifetime, of which 323/431 (75%) had injected drugs last six months before the present incarceration. They represented 22% (323/1499) of the total participating inmates. Ever IDU in prison were reported by 143/431 (34%) of lifetime PWID, 10% of all inmates. IDU during the present incarceration occurred among 29 (9%) of the 323 who had injected last six months. IDU during incarceration with syringe or needle previously used by others at least once, were reported by 95 (66% of those who had injected drugs in prison, and 23% of lifetime injectors).

**Conclusion:** If the studied inmates were representative of the total prison population, we would expect about 300 inmates with CHC caused by IDU to start serving prison terms of more than 90 days duration each year. They would be available for antiviral treatment. This indicates that prisons may be an important arena for antiviral treatment in PWID.

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