

Reimbursing incarcerated individuals for participation in research: A scoping review

Andrea Mambro¹, Avidah Afshar¹, Frederic Leone¹, Camille Dussault¹, Mark Stooové², Julian Savulescu^{3,4}, Josiah D. Rich⁵, Daniel H. Rowan⁶, Julia Sheehan⁷, Nadine Kronfli^{1,8}

¹Centre for Outcomes Research and Evaluation, Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, ²Burnet Institute, School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, ³Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom, ⁴Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Japan, ⁵Center for Health and Justice Transformation, The Miriam and Rhode Island Hospitals, Departments of Medicine and Epidemiology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, ⁶Division of Infectious Disease, University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, ⁷The Hepatitis C Trust, London, United Kingdom, ⁸Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Disease and Chronic Viral Illness Service, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

BACKGROUND

- Little is known about global practices regarding the provision of reimbursement for study participation to people who are incarcerated.

PURPOSE

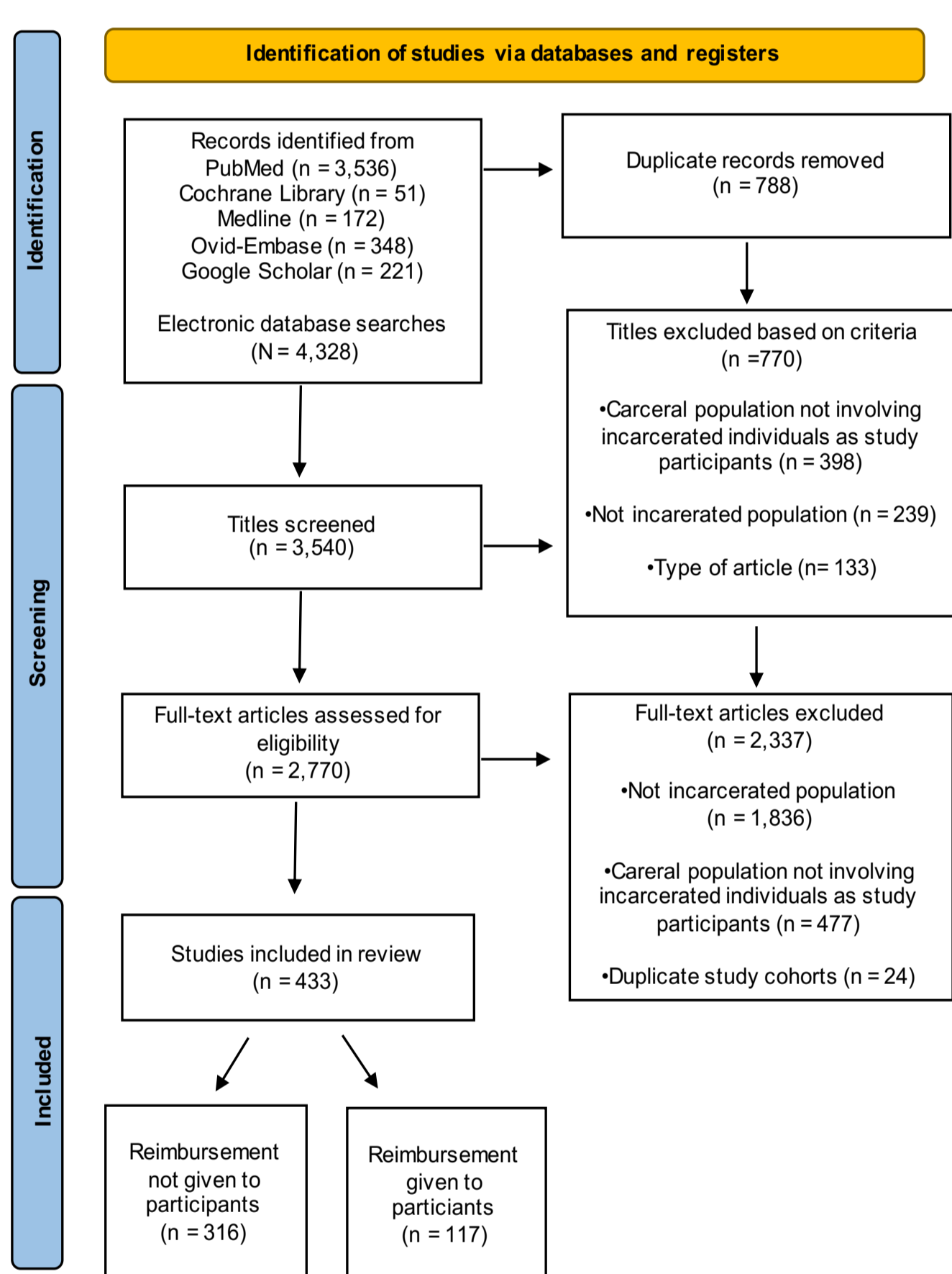
- We aimed to describe variations in practice across jurisdictions and correctional environments to help inform the development of more consistent and equitable practices.

METHODS

- We conducted a scoping review by searching PubMed, Cochrane library, Medline, and Embase, and simultaneously conducted a grey literature search for English and French language articles published until September 30, 2022.
- All studies evaluating any correctional-based research were included if recruitment of incarcerated participants occurred in any carceral setting; we excluded studies if recruitment occurred exclusively following release.
- Where studies failed to indicate the presence or absence of reimbursement, we assumed none was provided.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Flow diagram of included and excluded research articles



- A total of 2,965 unique articles were identified, 2,226 were eligible for full text review, and 274 were included.
- Of these, 178 (65%) did not offer reimbursement to incarcerated individuals.
- A minority (n=9; 5%) included reasons explaining the absence of reimbursement including Department of Corrections policies (n=4), system-level policies (n=4), and researchers' discretion (n=1).
- Among the 96 (35%) studies that provided reimbursement, the most common form was a one-time monetary (n=53; 55%) compensation during incarceration.
- Reimbursement ranged between \$3-610 USD in total and few studies (n=9; 9%) articulated the presence of a policy directing reimbursement.

Table 1. Studies NOT providing reimbursement to people who are incarcerated for research participation.

Author	Country	Year	Study design	Correctional setting	Sample size (population characteristics)	Reason reimbursement was not provided
Bouw	Netherlands	2019	Retrospective	National correctional institution	22 (100% male)	"As per the Dutch Department of Correctional Institutions of the Ministry of Justice and Security "[...] and in line with guidelines for scientific research in prison detention, no reward was granted" p. 2555
Cropsey	United States	2006	Cross-sectional	State correctional setting	374 (100% female)	"Because of prison regulations about payment of stipends for research participation, participants were not compensated for participating in the survey" p. 655
Liau	Canada	2021	Qualitative	Provincial prison	21 (100% female)	"Consistent with the Ministry of the Solicitor General policy" p. 4
Ortiz-Paredes	Canada	2022	Qualitative	Federal prison	14 (100% male)	"As per Correctional Service Canada regulations, participants did not receive an honorarium for their participation." p. 3
Phillips	United States	2000	Cross-sectional	State correctional setting	164 (100% female)	"Participation was voluntary and uncompensated as required by state regulations" p.60
Ramsey	United States	2021	Qualitative	State correctional setting	21 (100% female)	"Participants were not compensated for any study procedures per logistical issues surrounding distributing funds in that setting" p. 5
Romanchuck	Canada	2022	Cross-sectional	Federal prison	244 (N/A)	"Participants did not receive compensation for their participation as per Correctional Service Canada regulations" p. 924
Rowell	United States	2012	Cross-sectional	State correctional setting	134 (100% male)	"To remain consistent with DOC's [Department of Corrections] policy, participants were not compensated for participating in this study" p.2
Steffan	United States	2008	Randomized controlled trial	State correctional setting	91 (100% male)	"In accordance with the correctional system's requirements, no incentive for participation was offered to inmates." p.393
Stief	Brazil	2010	Cross-sectional	National prison	408 (41% male and 59% female)	"No inducements were offered and no negative sanctions were imposed on nonparticipants" p.513
Strong	United States	2020	Mixed-method	State correctional setting	255 (100% male)	"Any incentive beyond providing human contact and an attentive listener would both run the risk of being an undue influence, coercing participation, and be administratively prohibited" p.4
Trestman	United States	2007	Prospective	State correctional setting	508 (60% male and 40% female)	"Consistent with federal regulations governing prisoner research (45CFR46 Subpart C), it was clearly specified during the consent process that there were neither incentives for participating nor negative consequences for refusing." p. 492
Wurcel	United States	2021	Qualitative	County jail	21 (100% male)	"Neither the incarcerated individuals nor the participants who worked in the jail were allowed to accept incentives." p.4

Table 2. Studies providing reimbursement to people who are incarcerated for research participation.

Author	Country	Year	Study design	Correctional setting	Sample size (population characteristics)	Type of reimbursement	Total amount (currency) [timing of reimbursement]	Recurrent reimbursement (highest amount provided)	Type of study participation	Reason reimbursement was provided
Abbott	Australia	2017	Cross-sectional	State corrective services	69 (100% female)	Commissary privileges or gift card	60 (AUD) [during incarceration and post-release]	Yes (50)	Semi-structured interview	"Participants received a payment of \$10 AUD into their in-prison account consistent with usual research practice in NSW prisons" p.3
Adams	United States	2014	Prospective	State correctional setting	499 (69% male and 31% female)	Monetary	68 (USD) [during incarceration and post-release]	Yes (50)	Semi-structured interview	"Individuals [...] received honoraria of \$15 to \$18, an amount deemed to be sufficient for compensation, without being coercive" p.5
Cabezas	Spain	2021	Prospective	Social integration centre	548 (87% male and 13% female)	Possible reduced sentence	N/A	No	Screening	Based on "Article 5 of Royal Decree 840/17 June 2011" p. 4
Flatt	United States	2016	Exploratory	County jail pilot	237 (100% male)	Monetary	10 (USD) [during incarceration]	No	Screening and structured interview	"Consistent with federal regulations governing prisoner research (Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46 Subpart C (2013) permitted practice in California" p.4
Fogel	United States	2015	Randomized controlled trial	State correctional setting	521 (100% female)	Commissary privileges and monetary	60 (USD) [during incarceration and post-release]	Yes (30)	Questionnaires	According to North Carolina Department of Corrections regulations that "prohibit provision of money or other tangible reimbursements to incarcerated persons while still experiencing incarceration" p. 803
Gordon	United States	2021	Randomized controlled trial	County jail	240 (N/A)	Monetary	600 (USD) [post-release]	Yes (75)	Screening questionnaire, medical therapy, and urine sample	"The study will not pay participants for baseline assessments in jail due to the fact that such payments may be coercive" p. 6
Hayes	United Kingdom	2013	Cross-sectional	Local, open and training prisons	262 (100% male)	Commissary privileges	N/A	No	Interview	"Prisoners were not compensated for their time, but agreement was reached that they would still be paid for work or education if this was missed for attending the interview". p.590
Heigel	United States	2010	Cross-sectional	County jail	501 (70% male and 30% female)	Monetary	18 (USD) [during incarceration]	No	Questionnaire	"We took great care to ensure that the honorarium was not coercive by working closely with our IRB, correctional staff, and inmates at the facility to become familiar with the jail's "economy" so that we could establish a fair, but non-coercive honorarium for initial interviews and pre-release interviews." p. 4
Joe	United States	2010	Longitudinal	State correctional setting	2,026 (100% male)	Possible reduced sentence	N/A	N/A	Medical therapy	"As an incentive for participation, inmates were informed that their completion of treatment could influence prison-based policy decisions about a "sentence time-cut". p. 5

CONCLUSIONS

- The majority of research conducted to date in carceral settings globally has not reimbursed incarcerated participants.
- Increased transparency regarding reimbursement (or lack thereof) is needed in all correctional research and advocacy efforts are required to change policies prohibiting reimbursement of incarcerated individuals.
- Future work is needed to co-create international standards for the equitable reimbursement of incarcerated populations in research, incorporating the voices of people with lived and living experience of incarceration.

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