Reviewer's report

Title: Self reported health status, and health service contact, of illicit drug users aged 50 and over: a qualitative interview study in the United Kingdom

Version: 4 Date: 31 August 2009

Reviewer: Carla Treloar

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Minor essential revisions.
This paper is stronger following revisions.
References are needed
- Page 8: “However, deep vein thrombosis…”
- Page 11: “and because drug users tend to associate exclusively with other drug users” (I find this a particularly difficult statement to swallow as it assumes a simplified and homogeneous characterisation of people who inject drugs)

“One comparatively erudite man” – I find language somewhat patronising – it implies that the remainder of the sample was not erudite. This types of casual characterisation is not helpful in the construction of careful, considered social position of people who use drugs and who have experienced multiple disadvantage (including limited or interrupted educational opportunities), without the acknowledgement of drug use (and dependence) as a cause and effect of such disadvantages.

Page 12 – the first two paragraphs could be substantially shortened.

Page 14 – regarding interaction with health systems – I think that stigma and discrimination should be mentioned here – it is a pervasive experience of people who inject drugs.

References
In some cases, government health department reports have been cited where primary sources could be cited eg #15, #25

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'