Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and risk factors of syphilis infection among drug addicts

Version: 1 Date: 18 April 2005

Reviewer: Christina Marra

Reviewer's report:

General

The authors report the seroprevalence of syphilis among a cohort of drug abusers in Germany. They point out that the seroprevalence is high enough to justify routine screening in high-risk groups. This is a reasonable conclusion.

Major Compulsory Revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

The assessment that only individuals with a reactive TPHA and a reactive FTA-ABS IgM require treatment differs from what is recommended in the US and may be confusing to a US audience. Please provide the rationale (and a reference) for this approach. Were nontreponemal serological tests, such as the RPR or VDRL, performed? If not, again please provide the rationale. If they were performed, please provide the data.

In the US and in the UK, IV penicillin is not used to treat active syphilis without neurosyphilis. Please provide more information regarding why subjects with active syphilis in this study were treated with IV penicillin.

It would probably be best to avoid the term promiscuity. It is pejorative, and furthermore it is not defined in the context of this study.

In the Discussion, the authors state that they could not demonstrate a protective effect of the participation in substitution programs on the syphilis serostatus. Please provide these data in the Results section.

The range of seroprevalence for the 8 participating hospitals is mentioned in the Discussion. Please provide this information in the Results section.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

None

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests