Reviewer's report

Title: High risk behavior for HIV transmission among former injecting drug users: a survey from Indonesia

Version: 1 Date: 9 April 2010

Reviewer: Anneli Uuskula

Reviewer's report:


Authors state the following as aims of the study “aim of the present study was to explore the characteristics and the risk behavior of former IDUs in Indonesia in comparison with current IDUs”.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

* The information provided in the Background section would benefit greatly form clearer focus on former IDUs. As currently presented the information and many of the references provided pertain mostly to the non-injectors-never injectors.

* Authors state in the Background - „a considerable number of IDUs change from injection to non-injection drug administration or completely abstain from illicit drug use“ - is this something they have observed, believe? Or can this claim be substantiated with evidence from literature?

* Respondent driven sampling was used to access/recruit study subjects. Selecting exclusively IDUs for 'seeds' to initiate the recruitment warrants justification/explanation. Given that aim of the paper is to describe former IDUs why there were no former IDUs among the seeds? Also what is the potential drawback from selecting only IDUs for recruitment seeds?

* Description of the IDU status verification at the time of the recruitment is provided. Other than self report on last injection where there other measures in place to verify former IDU status?

* Analysis of the data

While comparing risk behaviors among current IDU and former IDU Pearson chi–square for dichotomous data and the independent t-test for continuous data were used. The authors did not assess the potential effect of confounding (i.e. health status – having AIDS). Especially for sexual risk behavior this might be of importance.

* Discussion:
Somehow the discussion seems like list of general statements with little relation to the findings. The authors need to be clearer in phrasing and evaluating the results of the study.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

* Although the instrument used for risk behavior measurement is well known providing more detailed information on measures as well findings would enhance understanding and conceptualization of the findings. I.e. composite measures on blood-transfer and sexual risk behavior are provided in Table 3, and some of the details in the text (such as the proportion of those IDUs reporting sharing etc.). Also title of Table 3 should include the indication of the time to which the findings presented pertain (last 30 days? Ever?

* It would be interesting to read authors discussion on how deterioration of health (having AIDS) might be associated with the current former IDU status?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'