Reviewer's report

Title: Comparing sexual risks and patterns of alcohol and drug use between injection drug users (IDUs) and non-IDUs who report sexual partnerships with IDUs in St Petersburg, Russia

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Reviewer: Seth Kalichman

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports the results of a study of sexual partners of injection drug users in Russia. The study addresses a significant public health concern. The Russian AIDS epidemic continues to grow and HV transmission between sex partners is diversifying the epidemic beyond injectors.

This is a particularly interesting study because it focuses on both injectors and non-injecting sex partners. The sample is large enough to draw reliable conclusions. The paper is well written and informative.

One area of the paper that can be improved is the description of the measures. In particular, the behavioral assessments are not sufficiently describes. It seems that the measures themselves are acceptable and they seem properly administered. Hover, considerable detail is missing in the Methods section.

The analyses appear appropriate and properly interpreted. The findings are somewhat unexpected and that much more interesting. The greater sexual risk among non-injectors compared to injectors has the potential to stimulate more research. The findings warrant further explanation, even is a bit more speculative, on what might account for the observed pattern of results. The implications of the observed STD rates for HIV transmission in this population also warrants additional discussion.

Overall this well written paper describes the findings of an interesting study. The results have important implications for HIV prevention with injection drug users in eastern Europe.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

No to all