Reviewer’s report

Title: Health problems among detainees in Switzerland: a study using the ICPC-2 classification

Version: 1 Date: 24 November 2010

Reviewer: Seena Fazel

Reviewer’s report:

The authors present a large audit of prisoner health problems identified from medical records in one prison in Switzerland. Although the abstract and introduction frames the study as a survey of morbidity, the authors state in the limitations that as the sample is selected and caution is warranted if the findings are extrapolated to all prisoners. Consequently, I think the study is of limited interest as what determines access to primary care in prison may have little to do with morbidity and more to do with health-seeking behaviour in prisoners who may be variously bored, selling or stashing medication, etc etc. I would have thought that prison medical services are more interested in the underlying morbidity rather than what happens to come up at one prison in one year.

The study would be strengthened by a validity study of some sort. Medical diagnoses in prison medical notes are known to be poor in many countries (especially for psychiatric diagnoses), so a comparison of diagnoses recorded in notes and semi-structured diagnostic interviews would be helpful - at least for a sample of this population.

Relating the findings to systematic reviews in the field would also be helpful - there are ones on Hep C, for example, (Vescio) and Hep B (Hartze).

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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