Reviewer's report

Title: The oral health of heroin drug users: case study in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Reviewer: David Otiashvili

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This is an overall interesting article focusing on important problem of oral health among heroin injectors. Following suggestions to the author are made:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. Variables, last sentence - Authors need to describe criteria based on which oral health was coded as “good” or “bad”.
2. Results, last sentence of the first paragraph - did not regularly brush their teeth, and did not go for regular dental checkups. What is the definition of “regularly” in both cases?
3. Table 1 – The same; please provide definition of “regularly”.

Minor Essential Revisions:
4. Abstract, last sentence of Conclusions – “should be an integral part of programmes and strategies to prevent addictions”. One might assume that authors in fact mean here only prevention programmes, and not necessarily treatment or harm reduction programmes. Suggest making it clear for readers.
5. Introduction, last sentence of paragraph 1 – This seems to be a very general statement and needs clarification. Suggest providing few specific examples of negative effects.
6. Introduction, last sentence of paragraph 2 – This statement needs clarification. Are drug users rejected because they seek dental services infrequently? Not sure I understand the logic here.
7. Design and selection of the IDU sample, first sentence – I am not sure why do authors provide here reference #16? Suggest removing.
8. Design and selection of the IDU sample, second sentence of paragraph 2 – suggest replacing “include” with “recruit”.
9. Design and selection of the IDU sample and Procedures – It is interesting to know how RDS seeds were selected. What was the profile of NGOs, were they low threshold service providers for IDUs? And most importantly, were respondents mostly beneficiaries of NGO services? If so, authors might consider discussing (in Discussion section) the extent to which being a client of a (HIV prevention, or harm reduction, or whatever) program can impact on a generalizability of the results.
10. Procedures, first paragraph - A pre-test questionnaire was conducted in Banja Luka on a group of 10 IDUs, to determine whether the questions were understood, the form of the questions and their order were adequate and length of the interview – this sentence needs rewording.

11. Procedures, last sentence of paragraph 1 – Suggest replacing “survey” with “interview”. Also, authors need to explain what kind of counseling was provided to respondents.

12. Variables, first sentence – Authors provide information on 10 variables that were analyzed. What about “being an NGO beneficiary”? Does that matter?

13. Discussion, last sentence of the second paragraph – This sentence needs English check.

14. Discussion, first sentence of paragraph 3 – Please indicate that the statement is based on a research done in another country.

15. Discussion, last sentence of paragraph 3 – It is not clear what does “different” mean here. Please clarify.

16. Discussion, paragraph 4 – References #23, 24, and 25 does not seem to provide information on the situation in BiH. Not sure why authors decided to use these citations here.

17. Discussion, paragraph 6, first sentence – Suggest using more sound source, instead of a web link, for example Global AIDS response progress report 2012 available online.

18. Discussion, paragraph 6, second sentence – This sentence needs English check.

Discretionary Revisions:

19. Discussion, paragraph 4 - Section would benefit from adding information on a dental health in general population (if known). Is dental health generally worst in BiH if compared to other countries (this is just speculation to raise the question)?

20. Discussion, last paragraph – Authors do acknowledge the limitations related to defining an oral health status based on respondents’ self-reports. In the field of substance use related research self-reports are commonly utilized to collect information on subjects’ behaviors. However, as a general comment – I was surprised to see in this manuscript, and in some other similar works by other authors, that such a subjective self-perceived health (oral health, in this case) status is a subject of scientific discussion.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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