Reviewer's report

Title: Coexisting social conditions and health problems among clients seeking treatment for illicit drug use in Finland: The HUUTI study

Version: 1 Date: 3 December 2012

Reviewer: Mary Mackesy-Amiti

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Major compulsory revisions

Methods

What exactly was assessed with the EuropASI and TDI instruments? More information is needed here, as well as a statement about the reliability and validity of the instruments.

What instrument was used to assess depressive and psychotic symptoms, and suicidal behavior?

Data collection

“Questions were asked on threats of violence from external sources.” What are external sources?

Data Analysis:

Large numbers are missing data on psychological symptoms. Were there any systematic reasons for this?

The authors state that analyses were conducted to compare complete cases with non-responders but the results of these analyses are not given.

Results

The variability in the numbers is quite confusing; it would benefit the reader to have a table showing the proportion of the sample having data available on each measure.

Infectious diseases

Before comparing rates of positive results, you need to report the proportions of participants reporting a screening test at all, and whether it varied by gender or age, or by route of drug administration. Except for HCV, Ns for screening among IV drug users seem to be rather small (49 HIV tests for IV users?). This should be addressed in the discussion.

third paragraph: (71%, n=35/49, p=0.34), please check the p-value
Psychological problems
State whether there were any differences in the availability of these data by gender, age, or other variables.

Discussion
4th paragraph: Is there any association between voluntary vs. involuntary treatment and psychological symptoms?

Discretionary revisions
Table 2 could be omitted.

Minor essential revisions
Methods: Subjects
change “The cohort comprised of” to “The cohort comprised” or “The cohort was comprised of…”
“Following their initial assessment”, delete “their”
“…treatment plans were drawn and clients were assigned into various…”, insert “up” after “drawn” and change “into” to “to”
“…communities where clients reported…”, change to “…where clients resided.” or “that clients reported…”

Methods: Instrument
“…responded to questions on their children,” change “on” to “about”
“Questions were asked on threats…”, change “on” to “about”
“Clients were asked if they have been screened,” change “have” to “had”

Results
Drug use patterns
Do you mean to say that 40% had used five different substances in the previous month? You reference Table 2 but this does not show the total number of substances used.

Seeking treatment
“Fifty-eight percent… have had previous contact,” delete “have”

Infectious diseases
“In Table 3…” change to “As shown in Table 3…”
third paragraph, “reports of positive screening” change to “reports of a positive screening…”

Discussion
“public unhygienic environment,” change “environment” to “environments”

Limitations, 2nd paragraph
“self-reported data, the varsity of which,” change “varsity” to “veracity”

“… drug users are not unwilling to discuss… to researchers,” change “to researchers” to “with researchers”

“when public trust in governmental/administrative institutions in Finland is comparably high,” compared to what? suggested change “comparably high” to “reasonably high”

Conclusion
“drug use problem does not exist…” change to “drug use problems do not exist…”

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.