Reviewer's report

Title: Cannabis treatment outcomes among legally coerced and non-coerced adults

Version: 1 Date: 20 February 2007

Reviewer: Mary-Lynn Brecht

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript addresses the topic of treatment outcomes for marijuana abuse/dependence—a topic not yet extensively studied even though marijuana users have a substantial impact on treatment systems because of their not insignificant numbers. The intersection of this topic with legal coercion into the treatment system pinpoints a potentially costly segment of the substance user population. The paper is well organized and presented, drawing on appropriate analyses. Table 2 was missing from my review copy, so my comments cannot include anything relevant to the missing information. Clarification on a few points will assist readers interpret results appropriately.

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

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

1. p.5, Please clarify the unit of analysis. Is it "admission"? If so, how were multiple admissions by the same person within the designated period handled? Did analyses include control for possible such clustering? If not, why not?
2. p.7, last 2 paragraphs. In most of the text, percentages are rounded to whole numbers, but tenths are used in these 2 paragraphs.
3. p.9 first paragraph under "Characteristics of Clients who Completed Treatment." It's not clear to me how the last 3 sentences in this paragraph fit into this section on Completion—they refer to differences between coerced and non-coerced groups in abstinence and length of stay. Could you consider adding a section heading about discharge/90-day differences between coerced & non-coerced groups?
4. p.10, next to last line refers to "number of emergency room or hospital visits" but Table 1 includes percentage with past year ER visit—were different forms of these variables used in different parts of the analysis?
5. p.11, 2nd paragraph, line 2, refers to "having employment, family, or psychological problems"—earlier results referred to "number of days with employment problems." Again, as in #4, were different forms of variables used in different analyses?
6. p. 15, line 3-4. Unclear—"the extent of reporting on DSM-IV diagnoses and prescription of medications is inconsistent."
7. Table 1. Are entries omitted if non-significant (e.g. Hispanic, days of employment problems, days of social problems)? A footnote would clarify. (same for Table 3). Table 1 includes ASI variables with labels indicating "days of...", while Table 3 uses labels "ASI Employment Problems," etc. Is the measure the same (except for time, admission or follow-up)? If so, then labels should be consistent. If not, then this needs to be clarified.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.