Reviewer's report

Title: Risk factors for developing a cutaneous injection-related infection among injection drug users: a cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 13 June 2008

Reviewer: Vivian Hope

Reviewer's report:

General

This generally well written and concise manuscript presents important and topical findings on the skin and soft tissue infections among IDUs. The manuscript presents findings from the well designed, and highly regarded, scientific elevation study of North America's first supervised injection facility. The data from a cohort of IDUs using this facility is analysed to examine the factors associated with developing skin and soft tissue infections.

Major compulsory revisions:

There is one significant issue with the manuscript that needs to be addressed that affects both the Methods an Results section. The data is taken from the a cohort study, but it is not totally clear from the manuscript whether cross-sectional data from one time point (i.e. interview from a single time point per individual) or longitudinal data (from several time points per individual) is being used in the analyses. The figure appears uses follow-up data, however the number of participants used in the analysis for the table (1,065) suggest use of just baseline data, as only 877 of the participants had one or more follow-up visits. This important issue needs to be addressed.

Minor essential revisions:

1. It is suggested that the association with unstable housing is novel, however a similar association with housing issues has been previously been noted. See para 71 in Shooting Up: Infections among injecting drug users in the United Kingdom 2006. London: Health Protection Agency, October 2007. ISBN 978-0-901144-95-9
   http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947406808

2. Those individuals who agree to participant in a cohort study – i.e. one with follow-up – are quiet likely to be different to those who do not. The possibility of such a selection bias and its impact needs to be considered in the limitations section of the discussion.

Discretionary revisions:
1. In the discussion the extent of skin and soft tissue infections among the participants could considered in relation to the findings from past studies.

2. The authors could gives some consideration to the possible effects a supervised injection facility might have on the levels of skin and soft tissue infections among this group.

3. It is not clear why “cutaneous injection related infections” has been used rather than “skin & soft tissues infection” or “injecting site infections”.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests