English language publications regarding drug users, methadone programs and HIV among drug users in Hong Kong are extremely rare. Therefore, this paper would provide a valuable addition to the literature. However, there a number of issues that must be addressed before the paper could be published.

First the research question is poorly defined. It is not clear if the study is about injecting drug users (IDUs) or methadone patients. If the focus is on IDUs, the authors should limit the analyses to the 25% of the sample (new admissions) that reported injecting at the time of admission. This has important implications for interpreting risk behaviors among IDUs since although only 18% of the sample reported current unclean syringe use, 72% of IDUs were sharing syringes. If the study is not about IDUs, then the title, the abstract and the introduction and discussion sections should be revised.

Second, the methods are not well described. Specifically the dependent variable needs to be described clearly. The description needs to specify exactly which variables were used to compute the "risk score" and how these variables were weighted in the computations. Additional information is also needed regarding how the risk score was scaled in the analysis. The risk score appears to be a continuous variable that was dichotomized an analyzed as a binary outcome in the logistic regression and multi-level models. The cut-point for dichotomizing the risk score needs to be specified and the rationale for selecting that cut-point needs to be described.

The description of the analysis needs more details as well. How were variables selected for the logistic regression? Were other variables considered? Were the variables forced into the model or was some type automated variable selection procedure used?

Additional information regarding the characteristics of the methadone clinics and the patients at each clinic needs to be presented. What services do the clinics provide? What are the proportions of patients at each clinic that are admitted for detoxification and for maintenance? What are the dosage levels (mean/median) for patients on methadone maintenance and do they vary by clinic? Since very little has been published in English language journals about methadone in Hong Kong, it would be very helpful to provide some local context. For example, do patients have to pay for methadone or are the programs funded by the
government? Are patients required to attend clinics in their own neighborhoods or can they attend clinics in other neighborhoods? What are the laws and regulations regarding syringe access and possession? Can IDUs purchase syringes at pharmacies and are there any syringe exchanges in Hong Kong? Is syringe possession legal? If it is available, information on the size (e.g. 1-ml, 2-ml, 5-ml) and type (e.g. detachable needle, permanently attached needle) of syringes used would also be helpful.

The description of the limitations regarding sample selection and self-reported data is adequate.

There are a number of other minor details (e.g. omitted words, excessive decimal places on some numbers, etc.) that will need to be addressed prior to publication, but these major issues need to be addressed first.

**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.