Author's response to reviews

Title: Reports of Evidence Planting by Police among a Community-Based Sample of Injection Drug Users in Bangkok, Thailand

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Natalie Pafitis MSc
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Dear Natalie Pafitis and Colleagues:

Re: MS: 2082282301261212 – “EVIDENCE PLANTING BY POLICE AMONG A COMMUNITY-BASED SAMPLE OF INJECTION DRUG USERS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND”

Thank you for your email dated July 9, 2009 and for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We found the suggestions of the reviewers of our revised manuscript to be helpful and we believe that it is improved as a result of the advice received. We have taken the reviewers’ suggestions into careful consideration in all instances.

An updated version of the manuscript has been prepared, and details of our responses to the reviewers’ requests are provided here. We hope you find these revisions acceptable. If there is any other information you require, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you again for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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Response to Reviewer Daniel Reidpath

1. We appreciate Dr. Reidpath’s request for consistent use of the phrase “reported evidence planting.” However, we have chosen not to use this phrase in every instance (i.e., every time we refer to our dependent variable) for several reasons. First, we indicate clearly in our Methods section that our dependent variable is derived via self-report. Second, in the first reference to the term in the Abstract and Discussion section, we remind the reader that this is indeed “reported evidence planting.” Third, although the other two reviewers shared a similar concern (i.e. they asked us to emphasize the self-reported nature of the measure), they were satisfied with the revisions we undertook to address their concerns. Fourth, it would seem rather unconventional to adopt the phrase “reported evidence planting” throughout the paper. We would rather make clear in the methods section that the variable was self-reported, and then simply refer to “evidence-planting” throughout. Further, we would rather not use “reported evidence planting” in every instance as it seems to us to suggest that the reports of evidence planting are far less valid than reports of other behaviours or experiences. In other words, we feel that adopting this terminology would be somewhat disrespectful of the accounts we obtained, which we believe to be generally valid. However, we would be willing to undertake these revisions to address this concern if the Editor feels it is necessary.

2. Dr. Reidpath requested that we clarify the sentence describing incarceration rates among drug users. Therefore, we have revised this sentence in the Introduction (last sentence on page 3):

“This approach has led to high rates of incarceration for individuals convicted of possession of illicit substances, and nearly two-thirds of those in prison are drug offenders.”

3. Dr. Reidpath expressed concerns that the last sentence of the Introduction suggests that anecdotal reports of evidence planting are true and this study simply seeks to measure prevalence and correlates. We disagree somewhat with this comment because we note that these reports are “anecdotal”, and we feel there is nothing else in the sentence that suggests that these reports are true. However, we would be willing to undertake further revisions to address this concern if the Editor feels necessary.
4. Dr. Reidpath requested that we clarify the sentence in the Discussion section that refers to our findings corroborating previous anecdotal reports of evidence planting by police. We have revised this sentence (first paragraph on page 8):

“Our analysis of self-reported evidence planting helps to corroborate previous anecdotal reports by suggesting that Thai police routinely plant drugs on suspected drug users and dealers.”

5. Dr. Reidpath requested that we rework the following sentence in the Discussion section so as not to imply that our research establishes the existence of evidence planting by police (first paragraph on page 8): “Our findings indicate that evidence planting by police is indeed another way in which abuse of power by police may be exerted in Thailand…” Again, we feel that although our study is cross-sectional, we did establish the reported prevalence of evidence planting, and we choose to regard these reports as generally valid – i.e., we believe that some level of evidence planting does indeed occur in this setting given our results and previous reports of the practice. We also wish to point out that the sentence in question emphasizes that evidence planting is another way police abuse “may be” exerted. Therefore, we feel we have been sufficiently cautious we would be willing to undertake further revisions to address this concern if the Editor feels necessary.

6. The sentence in the Discussion that describes the association between midazolam and evidence planting by police has been corrected (first paragraph on page 9):

“Midazolam, a legal benzodiazepine with potent amnestic and ventilatory depressant effects, was found to be independently associated with evidence planting of drugs by police.”