Reviewer’s report

Title: Hepatitis C Virus infection in Irish drug users and prisoners – A scoping review

Version: 0 Date: 05 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Jean Long

Reviewer's report:

I have marked no for the methods as the method used is correct but the use is not transparent and could not be added to in the future by this or another author. However, I think this author could address this, please see my comments below.

Major comments

This scoping review titled Hepatitis C virus infection in Irish drug users and prisoners: A scoping review’ is a useful reference document. The introduction is clear and the objective and rationale for the review are clearly stated.

The guiding framework for the scoping review used is appropriate but its application to each stage of the methods is not clearly presented. I suggest organising the methods using the six-stage framework using the six headings, or if the journal does not allow, using the first sentence of each paragraph to denote the stage in the framework being applied. The methods as they currently stand could not be repeated by another set of authors who may wish to update this review at a later date, so I suggest increased transparency using more detailed explanations in the narrative and/or appendices. In particular, I suggest that the authors provide their search strategies in soft appendices. The inclusion and exclusion criteria need to be stated earlier in the methods and in more detail considering (populations, comparator or comparison, intervention or phenomena or expectation, outcomes or impact, and time) or else presented in a soft appendix and the reasons for exclusion of each paper at each stage need to be summarised in the prism flowchart. An appendix with a listing of the studies excluded would be interesting. The end date of the search needs to be stated. The weakest part of the methods was the section covering analysis. At present, the text reads like a quote from a qualitative research text book rather than the process of identifying codes and categories to classify the literature which is what appears to have been done in the results. The authors need to clearly state how they coded the data and how they arrived at the categories for the data.
The categories presented in the findings do appear quite sensible but the reader does not know how they were identified and more importantly another author could not repeat the analysis required to update this paper.

The narrative results would benefit from stating the year each study was completed or published, outlining developments, progress and changes in the area overtime, and identifying gaps that remain for each category and subcategory; this is part of the study objectives. There is some data on identified gaps in the discussion but I think it should be moved to the results as identifying gaps was one of the objectives.

There are no peer review papers or grey reports that examine the effectiveness of interventions to prevent the spread of HCV among prisoners or drug users. I think this is worth discussing.

There is a claim in paragraph 2 of the discussion that this scoping review does not find (refs 80-82).

There is no mention of incidence gaps in the discussion.

Minor comments

Introduction: The abbreviation PWUD is not explained

Throughout the script: The spelling for general practise is normally general practice

Findings: One of the incidence studies is with PWUD not PWID; the authors need to state this.

Findings: The introduction to the prevalence section should state PWUD or PWID. In the prevalence section, risk factors are reported sparodically. The incidence section presents an overview of risk factors at the end of the section; I would suggest doing the same for the three prevalence sections.

In each section state gaps

Mix of english and american spelling in text. i persume english spelling is required

Numbers in text do not follow conventional rules

There are unreferenced statements in the discussion

Summary table of studies needs the headings to repeat on each page

Some of the references need correction

Generally, the english requires editing
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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