Author’s response to reviews

Title: Measurement of sexual health outcomes among people who inject drugs: pilot study in Catalonia, Spain and Barnaul, Russia

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The authors thank the reviewer for their insightful comments that helped us improve the manuscript. We look forward to the final decision on publishing the manuscript.
Comments from the Editor:

• Please state in the 'Ethics approval and consent to participate' section whether informed consent was not only required but taken from participants and whether this was verbal or written

Following the editor suggestion, the ethical statement has been amended

Comments from the Reviewer:

This manuscript examines the utility and validity of draft sexual health indicators developed by the World health Organization for use among people who inject drugs (PWID). While the potential scientific contribution of establishing the utility and validity of these new measures is significant, the manuscript seems underdeveloped, particularly the empirical analysis of the policies and laws. Specifically, there are several issues that the authors may wish to consider that may improve the overall impact of their paper.

Comment 1. First, the analysis of the "Policies and laws related to sexual health indicators" is potentially very interested but not discussed in significant depth. For example, on pages 8-9 the authors outline the dimensions that were analyzed and assessed, but there are no details regarding the data used or the coding procedures followed. Why did the authors focus on these dimensions? How were these legal and policy dimensions assessed? Legal statutes are not always clear even within a single country, did the authors assess for coder reliability of their interpretations both within and across the two countries? Similarly, across all of these dimensions, there appear to be only four that vary between the two countries. What are the implications that these counties are more similar than different?

Comment 2. Second, the analysis of policies and laws is referenced in the empirical analysis of the survey data, but it does not appear to have been considered in the final statistical models. While having only two countries will limit what kinds of analyses that can be done, more discussion is needed to connect the context analysis of the laws and policies with the analyses of sexual attitudes and sexual health indicators. It would seem that a more expansive discussion of how context factors may be shaping the survey findings seems warranted, particularly if part of
the aim of this paper is to stimulate more research on contextual variation in laws and policy that influence sexual health.

• Answer to comment 1 and 2. We thank the reviewer for raising issue. Although a deeper analysis of policies and laws related to sexual health indicators could be included in the manuscript, this would not be in line with the main objective of this study “to pilot selected SH indicators proposed by WHO with the aim to assess their feasibility and utility for IBBS among people who inject drugs”. From our point of view, the National Commitments and Policy Instrument on Sexual Health (NCPI) section was used in order to provide a policy snapshot but not a comprehensive policy content analysis, which is out of the scope of the given study. Nevertheless, in order to avoid misunderstandings, we have stressed it in the introduction and discussion section (see page 4 and 18).

Comment 3. Finally, more discussion of the measurement procedures and statistical properties of the sexual competency and social norms on sexuality scales would be helpful. It is not stated, but this reader assumed that the social norms scale was summed in the same fashion as the sexual competency scale was constructed. More descriptive statistics on these new measures also would be helpful in assessing their properties (e.g., range, mean, mode, and Alpha Reliability).

• Answer to comment 3. We agree with the reviewer’s suggestion and have included more detailed information of the measurement procedures and statistical analysis section to avoid misunderstandings (see pages 9 and 10).