Author’s response to reviews

Title: Hepatitis C Virus Screening and Treatment in Irish Prisons from a Nurse Managers' Perspectives - A Qualitative Exploration

Authors:

Des Crowley (doctordes@hotmail.com)

Marie Claire Van Hout (M.C.VanHout@ljmu.ac.uk)

Carol Murphy (murphc95@tcd.ie)

Enda Kelly (ETKelly@irishprisons.ie)

John Lambert (jlambert@mater.ie)

Walter Cullen (walter.cullen@ucd.ie)

Version: 1 Date: 10 Nov 2018

Author’s response to reviews:

Editor Comments:

In additional to the reviewers' comments, please also address the textual overlap issue as specified as below:

1 Textual overlap
We note that the current submission contains some textual overlap with other previously published works, in particular:

https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/onmsd/nmpdu/nmpddn/nursing%20in%20the%20prison%20service.pdf

DOI:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-003153

https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/cit265

doi http://dx.doi.org/10.16966/2380-5536.141

https://doi.org/10.1089/apc.2010.0142

The overlap mainly exists in the sections, as below,
(1) the 6th paragraph of Introduction (the paragraph starting with 'A number of studies (two Irish papers) have identified barriers and facilitators to HCV...')
Author – text in manuscript is reworded
(2) last three lines of the first paragraph of Discussion (the sentence- 'Advice on prevention of communicable diseases and modifying high-risk lifestyles/behaviours...')
Author – text in manuscript is reworded
(3) 6th-13th line of the second paragraph of Discussion (Clinical independence is an essential component of good health care and health care professionalism...)
Author – text in manuscript is reworded
(4) 1st-5th line of the fifth paragraph of Discussion (It is recognised that peripheral venous access can be challenging in long-term PWIDs due to poor vascular health...)
Author – text in manuscript is reworded
(5) 1st-9th line of the tenth paragraph of Discussion (The provision of prison healthcare is challenging for all staff and particularly for nurses who have to...)

While we understand that you may wish to express some of the same ideas contained in these publications, please be aware that we cannot condone the use of text from previously published work. For the overlap within the methods section, please express the methods in a more concise way to ensure less overlap. Please also reference this paper in the methods section as appropriate. Please re-phrase these sections to minimise overlap.
Author – methods section is revised and streamlined

Reviewer reports:
Josiah D. Rich (Reviewer 1): This is a well written article that provides an important perspective on an important topic.
Author – Thanks for the positive feedback

It would be helpful to know more about the 12 nurse managers- how big is the whole pool of nurse managers in the country? Is this all of them or just 10%, and if so, how were they selected and were they compensated for participation?
Author - This is now clarified in the text – 12 nurse managers represent 12/13 closed prisons in Ireland

Page 10, line 58, change "form" to "from"
Author – correction is made in the manuscript

Page 17, line 48, change "nursed" to "nurses"
Author – correction is made in the manuscript

Maria Ganczak (Reviewer 2):
This qualitative study describes Hepatitis C Virus Screening and Treatment in Irish Prisons from a Nurse Managers' perspective.

While I think this is an important topic that warrants investigation, there were several issues with the manuscript itself that are significant enough that they seriously undermine the contributions of the study. I have a number of reservations about this paper. They are outlined below.
Introduction

The authors state: "In Ireland, like other developed countries, injecting drug use (IDU) is now the main route of HCV transmission [3,4]". To add two more references mentioned below would be of value.


Author- These have been added

Potential transmission routes for hepatitis C in prison include not only sharing needles, but also tattooing equipment, toothbrushes and hair clippers, as well as unprotected sexual contact. This should be mentioned in the Introduction section.

Author – This has now been included in the introduction

They further state:

Recent advances in HCV treatment including, direct acting anti-virals (DAA), mobile elastography, less restrictive treatment guidelines and the movement of treatment out of hospital based specialist services have revolutionised the HCV treatment landscape (Arain et al. 2016; European Association for the Study of the Liver 2017; Grebely et al. 2017; Zhou et al. 2016).

The authors should be consistent and decide whether to cite references by their numbers or by listing the authors' names.

Author – referencing is now consistent across the entire manuscript

Methodology

The authors state in the Introduction section that there are 15 prisons in Ireland. However, they further state "The nurse managers of all prison complexes across the Irish Prison Service (IPS) were invited to attend a focus group (...). A total of 12 nurse managers participated in the focus group". Fifteen prisons, but 12 nurse managers; it looks like 3 nurse managers are missing in the study. Please, clarify.

Author – This is now clarified – there are 13 closed prisons and 2 open prisons across the IPS – open prisons do not have a nurse manager so 12 out of the 13 were represented

The authors state: "This guideline included a series of (...) questions covering the following areas:..." I would add "safety concerns" as an additional area.

Author – safety concerns were not included in the focus group guidelines- this theme only emerged from the focus group narratives

Results

The authors state: "Lack of knowledge among prisoners was seen as barriers to engagement with HCV care" and they cite some opinions of the nursing managers as follows:

"The myths are still out there and it goes to show maybe we need to follow up on that".
"They (prisoners) can be the biggest block not because they are opposed to it but because they don't have the knowledge".
However, the potential reader does not know if there is appropriate hepatitis C awareness and information materials in all relevant languages available in all Irish prisons. This should be explained in the Introduction section and further discussed in the Discussion section.
Author – a section on this is now included both in the introduction and discussion sections

Discussion

The authors mention

The authors state: "This was of particular relevance for protection prisoners, a growing cohort in Irish prisons due to an increasing gangland culture in Ireland". To add a relevant reference would be of value. Please also check wording and grammar as there seem to be a few errors.
Author – sentence has been reworded and a reference added

The authors state: "Nurses working in the IPS have a wide range of professional experience and qualifications." However, they state in the Results section "Many nurses had not received phlebotomy training and of those who did were seen to lack confidence in conducting the procedure". Clearly, such neglect in the training and recruiting system should be immediately made up as this is an important risk factor of sharps injury, as well as of contracting BBV infection. To cite a recent study which reported that 28.7% of prison staff had ≥ 1 blood exposure during professional career and 8% - sustained it in the preceding year, would be of value (HBV, HCV, and HIV infection prevalence among prison staff in the light of occupational risk factors, Med Pr. 2017;68(4):507-516).
Author – this point has been expanded and now includes the provided reference

"Fear of performing phlebotomy was identified by a number of participants. This was linked with the known high levels of BBV infection among prisoners, and the associated risks of needle stick injury and fear that prisoners might use the needle as a weapon." Were nurses working in the IPS familiar with the post-exposure management? Please, clarify.
Author – Nurses PeP knowledge did not arise in the focus group narrative – I have included this in the discussion section and recommend it as a suggestion for further investigation

"This variation was reported in the two previous Irish prison HCV studies and prison in Ireland are categorised in low, medium and high-risk prisons (Allwright, Bradley, Long, Barry, et al. 2000; Drummond et al. 2014)" and further "It is recognised that peripheral venous access can be challenging in long-term PWIDs due to poor vascular health as a result of years of intravenous drug injection and related medical complications (Kral et al. 1999). Poor venous access may require specialist staff to take blood, which if only available in hospital phlebotomy services can increase stigma, cost and security for prison populations (Harris and Rhodes 2012)" as well as "Adopting a standardised opt-out approach to HCV screening at committal across the IPS has the potential to increase screening uptake, reduce the stigma associated with declaring IDU and increase confidentiality (Meghan D. Morris, Brown, and Allen 2017; Zhou et al. 2016)." etc.
Again, the authors should be consistent and decide whether to cite references by their numbers or by listing the authors' names.
Author – as above all references are now consistent throughout the manuscript

References
Reference 24 is triplicated (references 24, 43 and 44 are the same reference:
Author – these errors are rectified and all references have been crossed checked and standardised across the manuscript