

HIV/HCV PREVENTION IN AUSTRALIAN INCARCERATED POPULATIONS: A REVIEW INTO PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES

Au M¹

¹ James Cook University, Cairns, Queensland, Australia

Prisons have been well-identified as settings for high rates of HIV/HCV infection. The purpose of this article was to review existing preventative practices in prisons across various Australian jurisdictions and identify any limitations involved. A consideration into some successful interventions that is currently practiced overseas were made, supplemented with available data for its viability in an Australian context.

The variability in health systems and its interaction with corrective services across jurisdictions has a potential impact in the delivery of HIV/HCV prevention and its outcomes.

Decriminalisation of illicit drugs may offer a means of HIV/HCV prevention and application to an Australian context will require political will-power guided by evidence. Research into its impact on both health and legal systems would be required.

Australian prisons employ a comprehensive array of HIV/HCV preventative measures primarily through reducing intravenous drug use and the provision of safe sex. These include condom distribution and opioid substitution treatment. However, provision of these services vary significantly across jurisdiction with some not offered in full. The principle of equivalence is usually not met.

Furthermore, needle and syringe programs as well as tattooing programs should be part of Australia's response to HIV/HCV prevention in prisons but due research is required into its application in Australian prisons.

New preventative strategies for HIV/HCV should be considered given the strong predisposition towards infection in prisons. It is a tragedy that Australia does not provide the same level of access to preventative services in prisons as it does in the community.