



INCARCERATION AND NON-ADHERENCE TO HIV TREATMENT AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- People who inject drugs (IDU) continue to suffer high rates of death from AIDS, despite the availability of effective treatment.
- To successfully treat HIV with antiretroviral therapy (ART), patients must take their ART as prescribed. This is called "adherence".
- Incarceration is a common experience for people who use injection drugs.
- We conducted this study to investigate the effect of incarceration on patterns of adherence to ART among IDU.
- Between 1995 and 2008 we enrolled HIV-positive IDU into the study and, every six months, interviewed them about their incarceration experiences.
- We accessed the records held by the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS to measure their adherence to prescribed treatment.

FINDINGS

- 490 people were eligible for the study; of these, 271 people (55%) were incarcerated at least once.
- We found that individuals with a greater number of incarcerations were more likely to be non-adherent to prescribed treatment.
- For example, individuals incarcerated more than five times during the study were over three times more likely to be non-adherent to prescribed treatment.

QUICK FACT

PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT HIV TREATMENT FOR IDU NEED TO BE IMPROVED AND EXPANDED IN BOTH PRISONS AND COMMUNITY SETTINGS.

IMPLICATIONS

- In BC, all HIV therapy is delivered free of charge; however, there remain important barriers to successful treatment for people who use injection drugs.
- We found a strong relationship between being incarcerated and being unable to adhere to HIV treatment.
- Programs to support HIV treatment for IDU need to be improved and expanded in both prisons and community settings.

Milloy M-J, Kerr T, Buxton J, Rhodes T, Guillemi S, Hogg R, Montaner JS, Wood E. **Dose-response effect of incarceration events on non-adherence to HIV antiretroviral therapy among injection drug users.** *Journal of Infectious Disease*, 2011; 203(9): 1215-1221.

