INJECTING DRUG USE IS AN INDEPENDENT RISK FACTOR FOR REINCARCERATION AFTER RELEASE FROM PRISON: A PROSPECTIVE COHORT STUDY

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Background:
Ex-prisoners with a history of injecting drug use (IDU) are at risk of IDU resumption and poor health and social outcomes. We examined the effect of IDU resumption and other variables on time to reincarceration among adults with a history of IDU following release from prison.

Approach:
Structured interviews were conducted with 512 participants in Queensland, Australia prior to release from prison and approximately one, three and six months post-release. Data were linked prospectively with correctional records and the National Death Index. Covariates measured at multiple time-points were treated as time-varying. Kaplan-Meier estimation and Cox proportional hazards regression were used to estimate the median survival time and hazards of reincarceration respectively.

Outcomes:
Sixty-eight percent of participants (n=350) were reincarcerated over a total observation time of 1,044 years, representing a rate of 33.5 per 100 person-years (95%CI 30.2-37.2). Time-invariant predictors of reincarceration were: male gender, older age at release, previous adult or juvenile imprisonment, shorter imprisonment (<90 days vs. >365 days), release on parole, and drug-related sentence. Time-varying predictors included resumption of IDU, unemployment, and low perceived social support. Very high psychological distress at the most recent interview was protective. Factor-specific variation in hazard over time was observed and explored.

Conclusions:
Factors associated with criminal justice responses to drug-users increased the risk of reincarceration, alongside psychosocial factors. This study documented a high reincarceration rate and identified important risk factors for reincarceration that warrant consideration for policy and service delivery targeted at people with IDU histories exiting prison.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
No conflicts of interest to declare.