

VIRAL HEPATITIS AND HIV EDUCATION IN A USA PRISON SYSTEM

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Background:

Incarceration rates in the United States are higher than any other country. A major contributor to this is the USA's War on Drugs. As a result, many who use and inject drugs are incarcerated. This has led to a high prevalence of viral hepatitis and other infectious diseases. The rate of hepatitis C in the general US population is approximately 1 in 100. In US prisons and jails, it is estimated that the prevalence of hepatitis C is as high as 50 in 100. In Washington State, the prevalence of hepatitis C in prisons is 1 in 20 and the state-run prison system has implemented viral hepatitis and HIV education in each of its prisons.

Description of model of care/intervention:

In Washington prisons, 52 classes are taught each year at each of the 13 facilities with curriculum that includes viral hepatitis prevention and treatment, HIV prevention and treatment, safer drug use/drug splitting, safer sex, and safer tattooing. Additionally, 6 cycles of peer education interventions that includes education and skills building in a 6-session evidence-based curriculum that focuses on building communication skills with incarcerated persons to share harm reduction education in their social networks.

Effectiveness:

Over 20,000 students in Washington prisons have completed the viral hepatitis/HIV classes. This has led to better awareness of health protection, infectious disease prevention, prison health services, and release resources. Student surveys have demonstrated that students report a decrease in risky behaviors, more willingness to educate peers, and an increase in infectious disease knowledge.

Conclusion and next steps:

Prevention education and health promotion are essential for incarcerated persons. In order to reach viral hepatitis elimination goals, prisons and jails must be priority settings for targeted interventions and treatment. The NHCN is a resource for anyone who would like help starting or improving a health intervention curriculum with incarcerated persons.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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