Overdose deaths following prison release in Norway

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Inmates with opioid dependence – a particularly vulnerable group

- High rates of overdose deaths post release
  - Loss of tolerance
  - High risk of overdose first 4 weeks
  - Polydrug increases risk
  - Inmates from «drug» units at highest risk post release

Kilde: Merall et al, Addiction (2010)
What characterizes inmates?
Norway

✓ Project aim; visit all prisons and invite all inmates to participate
– Data collection during 2013-14
– Included 57 out of 63 prison-units nationally

➤ 1499 included inmates, including 96 women
➤ Mean age 34.5 yrs
➤ 2/3 born in Norway
➤ 2/3 living alone/single
➤ 56% with previous convictions/inmate experience
Inmates: Lifetime prevalence of drug use by gender. (%)

65%; lifetime experience with drug use

Similar for both genders

90% of those with drug use experience had experience with 2 or more drugs, and 45% experience with 10 or more drugs
Mean age at first use, by gender, %

- Lowest age at first use for cannabis and inhalants (16 yrs).
- Mean age for first use of amphetamines -18 yrs, and for heroin 21 years.
Around 50% had used one or more drugs daily six months prior to imprisonment.

Among those with daily drug use prior to imprisonment; 80% had prior convictions and 53% had experience with injecting drugs.
Experience with drug use *during* imprisonment, by gender (%)

A total of 35% had experience with drug use during current or previous imprisonment

Inmates with drug use experience during imprisonment; a highly selected group:
- 86% previously convicted
- 87% had used drugs daily 6 months prior to imprisonment
Summary:

A high prevalence of drug use problems among inmates

- 65% with drug use experience
  - Most had experience with multiple drugs

- Around 50% had daily use of drugs six months prior to imprisonment
  - Between 10-15% had used opioids daily

- Around 50% had been intoxicated during crime that caused imprisonment

- Around 50% had a drug-related conviction

- 35% had experience with drug use while in prison
Norwegian prison release project

✓ Prison database
  – Including dates of release
  – Data from 2000-2014
  – More than 150,000 releases
  – More than 90,000 persons

➢ Linkage with GMR data, with all cause mortality
Mortality rate: weeks following release
Previous research since 1990s

Overdose deaths and OMT; Norway

Overdose deaths

Numbers in OMT

Burden of disease report 2016; Norway; FHI
Timing of data collection

Number of overdoses

Project period
2000 - 2014
Conclusions

- Inmates in Norwegian prisons are a group with high prevalence of drug problems.

- Many who are imprisoned, have used drugs regularly prior to imprisonment; and many of these also use drugs while in prison.

- We observe an immediate high risk of overdose death following release, with gradual decrease in risk over the first month.

- We recommend high treatment (OMT) availability both inside and outside of prisons.

- We recommend well planned prison releases; including planned treatment and health care transfers/ follow up; starting on day 0.