

PRISON BASED TREATMENT FOR ALCOHOL AND RELATED OTHER DRUG USE AMONG INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS MEN

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Introduction / Issues: A history of problematic alcohol and other drug (AoD) use is common among prison inmates, with AoD use frequently linked to the offences that lead to imprisonment. Despite this, Australian research into prison based AoD treatment needs of inmates is sparse. This presentation will report on the findings of a PhD study that examined the treatment experiences of inmates undertaking the Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program (IDATP) in NSW. IDATP, which takes six months to complete, was established in 2013 and uses group and individual therapy approaches. This project by an Aboriginal researcher has a particular focus on Indigenous Australians due to the much higher levels of imprisonment compared to other Australian's at 1,857 versus 144 per 100,000 population (2014).

Method / Approach: This study draws from PhD research that uses a qualitative approach to investigate the AoD treatment experiences of 31 inmates/participants (14 Indigenous). Both pre- and post-intervention interviews were conducted.

Key Findings: Emergent themes include that most Indigenous inmates were more concerned about the group dynamic than whether the facilitator was Indigenous. A reflective theme among many in both groups was that the program content may have a stronger impact if one of the facilitators had overcome AoD use problems.

Discussions and Conclusions: The findings have implications for peer based education and treatment within a prison context. Prison based programs may have greater credibility if one of the facilitation team has personally experienced AoD use problems. Indigenous men in prison may be more willing to discuss AoD use problems within an Indigenous only treatment group.

Implications for Translational Research: Findings from this research could be used to inform and improve AoD treatment in prisons across Australia.

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