Solaris Therapeutic Community – Treatment in Prison
(Oral Presentation)

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Background:

Since July 2009, Karralika Programs has been operating the Solaris Therapeutic Community for men within the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Karralika Programs takes the lead in program design, delivery, clinical governance, and practice and works in collaboration with the Australian Capital Territory Corrective Services.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:

Therapeutic Communities (TC's) are a long-established, evidence-based residential rehabilitation model in which the community itself, through self-help and mutual support is the principle means for behaviour change. The peer structure within the program assists residents to develop and practice healthy behaviours, attitudes, and values, while the staff provide behaviour change therapies in the form of counselling, case management, groups and support of the Community.

The Solaris Therapeutic Community is a 4 – 6 month program where upon referral and assessment, detainees transfer from general prison population to the Solaris accommodation unit for the duration of their program. Solaris incorporates the core underlying principles and processes of the Therapeutic Community model, with adjustments made for the prison environment and safety. Psycho-educational style group sessions, supported by individual sessions, with additional flexibility regarding typical Therapeutic Community functions and processes supports the model.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:

Established initially as a pilot in 2008-09, the Solaris Therapeutic Community has been evaluated and continues as an evidence-based program in Australia, backed by a large amount of data and client outcomes. Through regular review, program modifications and improvements including modifications to structures and processes designed to address the psychological, behavioural, and emotional dimensions of substance misuse have been challenged and adjusted along the way. We have learnt that participants achieving recovery in the prison environment and maintaining it post-release or in general population is very complex and difficult.

Since the establishment of Solaris, several similar programs have been established in prisons in other States, using the TC model.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

The presenter will provide data and outcomes of the Solaris program over its unique (for Australia) program longevity, also identifying the modifications implemented that have supported the foundational strengths of the Therapeutic Community model and approach to treatment, and the complexity involved with co-occurring criminogenic and substance use issues.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: