

Changes in tobacco smoking frequency following exposure to smoke-free prisons among men who regularly injected drugs

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Introduction and Aims:

The prevalence of tobacco smoking in people who engage in injecting drug use (IDU) and people who are imprisoned is higher than the general population. State-wide tobacco-free prison policies came into effect in Victoria on 1 July 2015. The impact of tobacco-free policies on post-release tobacco smoking among people engaging in IDU pre-imprisonment is unknown. We analysed changes between pre- and post-imprisonment tobacco smoking according to exposure to tobacco-free prisons.

Design and Methods:

Data come from the Prison and Transition Health study, a cohort of men who reported regular IDU pre-imprisonment recruited in prison (index sentence; Sept2014–May2016). Among participants who 1) smoked tobacco in the month before index sentence; and 2) completed a community-based three-month follow-up interview, we calculated individual change in tobacco smoking frequency between the week preceding index imprisonment and the week preceding follow-up. We used multivariable linear regression to estimate the association between change in tobacco smoking frequency and exposure to tobacco-free prisons (none: index release <July 2015; partial: index reception <July 2015, index discharge >July 2015; complete: index reception ≥July 2015), adjusted for socio-demographics and prison-based drug treatment.

Results:

Participants (n=200) smoked tobacco, on average, 117 times per week (standard deviation [SD]:66) pre-imprisonment and 101 times per week (SD:71) at follow-up. Nine participants reported no tobacco smoking in the week preceding follow-up. In adjusted analysis, partial (Coef:-6.2; 95%CI:-32.5–20.2) or complete (Coef:-19.4; 95%CI:-47.0–8.2) tobacco-free prison exposure was not associated with change in tobacco smoking frequency.

Conclusion:

In a cohort of men who smoked tobacco and engaged in regular IDU pre-imprisonment we observed modest reductions in tobacco use post-release, unrelated to exposure to smoke-free prisons.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

Provision of effective smoking cessation interventions are needed during community re-entry to reduce tobacco use among men reporting IDU and encourage cessation.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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