

Reducing Health Inequities: A Health Systems Approach to Chronic Disease Prevention

Improving Health Care System Responses to
Chronic Disease among British Columbia's
Corrections Population:

A Review of Current Findings and Opportunities
for Change



**Provincial Health
Services Authority**
Province-wide solutions.
Better health.

Introduction

- Purpose
 - To provide an overview of current research and available information describing the health status and health care utilization of the corrections population in British Columbia.
 - The literature review also highlighted opportunities where the health system could improve its health care delivery for the populations of interest.
 - The literature review is intended as a starting point for further dialogue and collaboration and to inform the process of developing case studies and recommendations by the Working Group

Method

- Academic literature searches on PubMed and Web of Science in February 2010
 - Also, manual searches for relevant reports, websites, and grey literature
- Inclusion criteria:
 - Studies and reviews examining provincial trends in chronic disease prevalence and factors increasing the risk of being underserved by the health system.
 - English-language publications
 - Canadian context
- Total of 160 articles were included

Available Literature

- While there is a substantial amount of information available on individuals within federal correctional facilities, the literature review did not find much information specific to provincial facilities.
 - Therefore, the ensuing discussion is predominantly based on federal institutions and the populations housed and services provided therein.

Demographics: Adults Involved with the Corrections System

- Age
 - Majority < 40 years of age
 - Median age beginning to reflect Canada's aging population
- Ethnicity
 - Aboriginals overrepresented
 - Increasing representation of ethnic minorities
- Gender
 - Predominantly male
 - Growing numbers of women
- Education
 - Generally low levels of education

Demographics: Youth Involved with Corrections System

- Ethnicity
 - Aboriginal youth overrepresented
 - Increase in representation of Aboriginal Youth in custody
- Gender
 - Larger proportion of female youth involved with correction system than female adults

Health Status: Overview

- Disproportionately high levels of chronic health problems
 - High rates of concurrent mental and substance abuse disorders, as well as certain communicable diseases (HIV/AIDS and HCV)
- Health status inequities within corrections population
 - Aboriginals, women, and older offenders have higher risk of poor health outcomes.

Health Status: Overview (2)

- Underlying Susceptibility
 - Disproportionately impoverished
 - Less educated
 - High levels of unemployment and underemployment
 - Belong to ethnic minority groups.
- Features of Correctional Facility
 - Violence, overcrowding, and isolation
- Behavioural Risk Factors
 - Tobacco Use, Physical Activity Level, Diet
 - Violence, Injection Drug Use, Tattooing/Piercing, Sexual Risk Factors

Chronic Disease

- Mental Health:
 - High prevalence of individuals with addictions and mental health issues involved with corrections system
- Long-term Communicable Diseases:
 - HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis B/C most common
 - Testing is voluntary, prevalence difficult to assess
 - Low rates of treatment uptake for HIV and HCV infection among offenders
- Cancer
 - Lack of available information
 - Possible high rates of lung and cervical cancer
- Injury and Disability
 - Fracture and Blunt Head Injuries most common

Chronic Disease (2)

Heart Disease, Asthma, and Diabetes:

- Lack of information on prevalence rates
- Higher than expected prescription rates suggests that there is higher prevalence among the corrections population than the general population

Health Service Utilization

- Literature predominantly available on health service utilization while incarcerated.
 - Increased utilization of health care services compared with general population
 - Lack of information on health service utilization once released

Opportunities for Change

- Ensure Health Care Services Reflect Health Needs of Previously Incarcerated Individuals
 - Respond to the specific health concerns and chronic conditions predominant among the changing demographic: Female, Aboriginal and older individuals involved with corrections.
 - Mental health concerns
- Improve Continuity of Care
 - Communication, information and knowledge sharing between correctional facilities and RHAs
- Enhance Prevention Efforts
 - Increased disease prevention, health promotion, and education