Mechanisms to Improve and Promote Methadone Maintenance Therapy in Prisons in Iran: a Qualitative Study


Abstract
Introduction and objectives: Because of the rising cases of HIV among Injecting Drug Users, Methadone Maintenance Therapy, as one of the most important harm reduction intervention, has been initiated in prisons of Iran since 10 years ago. This study aimed to identify ways and mechanisms to improve the program from the perspective of people working in prisons including practitioners, consultants, experts, directors and managers of prisons. Methods: Data was obtained through 14 Focus Group Discussions including 8-11 persons in each session, conducted among practitioners, consultants, experts, directors and managers of prisons of the country in 2009 and 2010. The collected data was analyzed via content and themes analysis method. Results: Some of the most important suggested solutions included: reviewing and implementing protocols correctly, aligning MMT activities in prisons and out of prisons in public, training all individuals associated with the program (prisoners, families of prisoners, judges, and prison officials), focusing on prisoners’ employment and strengthening post-release cares, and enhancing psychotherapy methods along with methadone maintenance therapy. Discussion and Conclusion: These results can be used to improve the quality of MMT program in prisons of Iran.

Keywords: methadone maintenance therapy, prison, Iran, qualitative study

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