Opioid Substitution Treatment and HIV Prevention In Prison: Experience from Kyrgyzstan

Background
- Kyrgyzstan is situated along one of the world’s largest heroin trafficking routes, and has a concentrated HIV epidemic driven largely by injecting drug use.
- 63% of registered HIV cases are among people who inject drugs (PWID).
- Reported 2010 prevalence in prison populations upon intake was 2.4%, sentinel surveillance in prison indicated a prevalence of 7.2%.
- Injecting drug use amongst prisoners has been estimated to be 18%.
- In 2008, with funding from the Global Fund, Kyrgyzstan established a pilot program of opioid substitution treatment (OST) in the prison setting with the aim of reducing HIV transmission.

Methods
- The Republican Narcology Center, with the assistance of the USAID Quality Health Care Project, undertakes a programmatic review of the 4 year-old methadone program in the penitentiary system. The review included:
  - State epidemiological data
  - Program implementation data and
  - Literature review of external assessments of the program.

Findings
- In 2006, 147 patients were enrolled in OST, an average of 10 per month. By 2010, the number of patients enrolled had increased to 562.
- 27 of 145 (19%) active OST patients were HIV positive by year-end 2010, indicating that OST is available to prevent acquisition of HIV as well as transmission of HIV.
- External experts have evaluated the program positively, citing changes in injection behavior as well as quality of life for inmates receiving OST.

Conclusions
- Based on Kyrgyzstan’s epidemiological profile, the presence of an OST program in the prison setting is in line with international best practices in harm reduction.
- The program has been successful in terms of enrollment and retention.
- Future work will include further evaluation and scaling up of the program.

Patients Enrolled on OST in Penitentiary System, by Year

- 2006
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011

In 2008, opioid substitution treatment was introduced in the penitentiary system.