

Date: Sun, 17 Jan 2010 15:52:21

To: Parliamentary enquiry into prisons Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Brian Gordon, Principal research officer<lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Attention Brian Gordon

Submission from George O'Neil

Re Parliamentary enquiry on making our prisons work.

As a Clinical consultant specialising in rehabilitation after drug dependency there is much in common with prison work.

Unfortunately the prison system of WA isolates us from our patients for periods of time and is not integrated to work with drug treatment programs like ours. 80% of prisoners have long term problems with drug and alcohol problems.

In the UK and Norway we have been able to work with naltrexone to decrease dependence since 2003-4. We make the implants here in WA and export the product as well as assist with the program development. Unfortunately our philosophy of removing patients from dependence has been replaced by a prison policy of opiate replacement programs and so frequently the patients that are assisted by us to become opiate free only to return to methadone and opiate dependence each time the return to prison.

This interruption to their desired treatment and the exclusion of naltrexone implants in prison is surprising in a State where there are 3000 people on naltrexone programs outside of prison in WA.

I therefore believe the prison rehabilitation in isolation from drug experts in the community committed to abstinence or shortening the length of addiction damages patients recovery from addiction. The naltrexone implant program detoxed 12 times as many patients off opiate dependence last year (48 versus 562) compared to the Government program outside the prison. In this setting the jails in WA have become responsible in my opinion for increasing opiate dependence rather than decreasing it and therefore has a high risk of increasing recidivism and the length of addiction by increasing rather than decreasing the patients disease.
(Drug dependence)

This process of ignoring or excluding continuity of care of naltrexone services that the community of addicts relies on is a major policy problem that need to be reviewed in WA prisons.

The TGA has approved the GMP manufacture and export of WA implants overseas and allowed treatment with implants since August 2000. After 10 years it is time for the Jails to follow and review the evidence. (Greater than 40 publications including RCT's) We are also keen for our treatment before and after Jail to be integrated into a seamless continuous program integrating our facilities and less jail time especially for indigenous groups with poly drug problems.

Thank you for consideration of this short comment for your enquiry. I would be glad to be interviewed by your committee.

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