

## Addressing Substance Use Disorders among Male Prisoners: Short Commentary

**Sakarie Mustafe Hidig<sup>1\*</sup> Bashir Sharmarke Mohamed Abdule<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Division of Hepatobiliary and Pancreatic Surgery, Department of Surgery, The Fourth Affiliated Hospital, Zhejiang University School of Medicine, Zhejiang Province, China. <sup>2</sup>Clinical research assistant at Eurofins, Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

\*Corresponding Author Email: [hidig2015@icloud.com](mailto:hidig2015@icloud.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0002-4353-8199>

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.10932677

The issue of substance use disorders among incarcerated individuals is a complex and pressing concern within the criminal justice system. The article from the Herald "The Management of Adult Male Prisoners with Substance Use Disorders Presenting with Suspected Internal Concealment of Illicit Drugs: Challenges, Clinical Implications, and Best Practice Response" delves into the specific challenges faced in managing adult male prisoners who present with suspected internal concealment of illicit drugs [1]. This practice, known colloquially as "body packing" or "body stuffing," poses significant clinical and operational challenges for prison healthcare providers. One of the primary challenges highlighted in the article is the difficulty in accurately diagnosing and treating individuals who engage in internal concealment of drugs. The secretive nature of this behavior often means that prisoners may not disclose their drug use, leading to missed opportunities for intervention and treatment. Moreover, the health risks associated with internal concealment, including the potential for drug toxicity or overdose, further underscore the importance of developing effective clinical responses within correctional settings [2].

The article emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach to managing substance use disorders among incarcerated populations. Collaboration between healthcare providers, correctional staff, and mental health professionals is essential for identifying at-risk individuals, providing appropriate treatment and support, and implementing harm reduction strategies. Moreover, the integration of evidence-based practices, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication-assisted treatment, can significantly improve outcomes for prisoners struggling with substance use disorders [3]. Importantly, the article underscores the importance of addressing the underlying factors contributing to substance abuse and addiction among incarcerated individuals. This includes addressing trauma, mental health disorders, and social determinants of health, such as poverty and lack of access to education and employment opportunities [3]. By adopting a holistic approach to treatment, correctional facilities can better support the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals with substance use disorders back into society.

At the forefront of the article's contribution lies its exploration of the distinct challenges faced by healthcare providers and

correctional systems when dealing with adult male prisoners suspected of internal concealment of illicit drugs [4]. Unlike conventional substance abuse cases, where individuals may willingly seek treatment or admit their struggles, the clandestine nature of internal concealment complicates identification, diagnosis, and intervention [5]. This presents a novel and understudied facet of substance abuse within correctional facilities.

The case studies in the article illuminate the intricate challenges of managing prisoners suspected of internal concealment of illicit drugs (ICIDs). In Case 1, a prisoner evaded detection despite OST initiation, raising concerns about drug infiltration within the prison and inadequate monitoring during transfer. Case 2 highlights shortcomings in addressing ICIDs, with failure to retrieve swallowed packages and a lack of coordinated care. These cases underscore the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to enhance screening, monitoring, and collaborative interventions, mitigating the risks and complexities associated with ICID management in correctional settings [6].

## **RESULTS**

Through meticulous analysis, the article presents compelling results that underscore the complexity of addressing SUDs within correctional settings. It reveals that the secretive nature of drug concealment poses significant challenges for healthcare providers, leading to delayed diagnosis and intervention. Moreover, the findings highlight the heightened risk of drug toxicity and overdose among individuals engaged in internal concealment, emphasizing the urgent need for tailored clinical responses. In addition to elucidating the clinical implications of managing SUDs among male prisoners, the article offers insights into best practice responses. By synthesizing evidence-based approaches with real-world challenges, the results advocate for a multidisciplinary approach that integrates medical treatment, mental health support, and harm reduction strategies. This holistic approach not only enhances the health outcomes of incarcerated individuals but also contributes to broader public health initiatives. The results presented in the article underscore the importance of adopting innovative and adaptive strategies in

addressing SUDs within correctional settings. By shedding light on the challenges, clinical implications, and best practice responses, the findings pave the way for more effective rehabilitation efforts and ultimately contribute to improved outcomes for individuals struggling with SUDs in prison.

## **Implications**

The future implications of this commentary point towards a multifaceted approach to addressing substance use disorders among incarcerated populations, encompassing research, policy development, service integration, community support, and prevention efforts. By addressing these implications, stakeholders can work towards improving outcomes for individuals with substance use disorders both during and after their involvement with the criminal justice system.

## **Limitation and Future Research**

Limited access to comprehensive data hinders our understanding of substance use disorder (SUD) management within prison populations. Currently, data collection methods may be inadequate, impeding researchers' ability to gather thorough information. Future research should explore improved methods for data collection and access to relevant information to provide a more comprehensive understanding of SUD prevalence, treatment outcomes, and other related factors within correctional settings. The effectiveness of current treatment approaches for SUDs in prisons may be uncertain due to various factors such as limited resources and treatment adherence. As a result, there is a need for future studies to investigate the efficacy of different interventions and strategies. Understanding which approaches yield the best outcomes can guide the development of more effective treatment programs within correctional facilities, ultimately improving the overall well-being of incarcerated individuals. While existing research often focuses on adult male prisoners, other demographic groups within the prison population, such as females and juveniles, may have unique needs and experiences related to SUD management. Therefore, future studies should explore SUD management among these understudied populations to provide a more comprehensive understanding and ensure that interventions are tailored to meet the diverse needs of all incarcerated individuals.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research examining the long-term outcomes of SUD treatment in correctional facilities, including factors influencing recidivism rates and successful community reintegration post-release. Future research should investigate the impact of various treatment approaches on long-term recovery and reoffending rates. Additionally, the exploration of integrated care models that combine SUD treatment with mental health services within correctional settings is essential. Evaluating the feasibility and benefits of such integrated approaches can inform the development of more comprehensive and effective treatment strategies for incarcerated individuals with SUDs.

## CONCLUSION

The management of adult male prisoners with suspected internal concealment of illicit drugs presents numerous challenges for healthcare providers and correctional systems. However, by adopting a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to care, it is possible to improve outcomes for

individuals struggling with substance use disorders within the prison setting. This benefits the health and well-being of incarcerated individuals and contributes to broader public health and safety initiatives.

## Acknowledgments

Sakarie Mustafe Hidig MD, MS, Ph.D<sup>c</sup>: Study conception and design, data collection, analysis and Interpretation of Results, drafting. Bashir Sharmarke Mohamed Abdule: analysis and interpretation of results, drafting. All authors read and approved the final Manuscript. We Thank the anonymous Journal reviewers and the handling editor for comments on an earlier draft.

Competing Interests: None

Funding: None

## Abbreviations:

SUDs Substance Use Disorder

ICIDs internal concealment of illicit drugs

## REFERENCES

1. *John Arianda Owiti, Molli Benson, Lasekan Oluseye,(2023). The Management of Adult Male Prisoners with Substance Use Disorders Presenting with Suspected Internal Concealment of Illicit Drugs: Challenges, Clinical Implications, and Best Practice Response.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.24966/AAD-7276/100147>
2. HM Prison & Probation Service (2021) Interim Guidance on managing people suspected of concealing illicit items internally in the secure environment (SECURITY). HM Prison & Probation Service.
3. Duke K, Gleeson H, MacGregor S, Thom B (2023) The risk matrix: Drug-related deaths in prisons in England and Wales, 2015-2020. J Community Psychol.
4. Bulakci M, Cengel F (2016) The role of radiology in diagnosis and management of drug mules: An update with new challenges and new diagnostic tools. Br J Radiol 89: 20150888.
5. Abdul, B. S. M., & Hidig, S. M.(2024). Internet Addiction in Comparison to Substance Addiction. <https://gaspublishers.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Internet-Addiction-in-Comparison-to-Substance-Addiction.pdf>
6. *John Arianda Owiti, Molli Benson, Lasekan Oluseye,(2023). The Management of Adult Male Prisoners with Substance Use Disorders Presenting with Suspected Internal Concealment of Illicit Drugs: Challenges, Clinical Implications, and Best Practice Response.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.24966/AAD-7276/100147>