



Self-harm following release from prison

The Challenge

Exploring the incidence of self-harm following release from prison. The risk of suicide following release from prison is three times greater than those still incarcerated. The aim of the study was to determine the risk factors and characteristics of emergency department (ED) presentations resulting from self-harm in adults after release from prison.

How the PHRN Infrastructure Helped

Data Linkage Queensland (DLQ) linked records from the state-wide Emergency Department Information System with participant identities to identify all ED presentations in the group in Queensland from 1 June 2002 to 31 July 2012. Data from all ED presentations resulting from self-harm were coded to characterise each presentations.

The Result

This study gives insight into the demographic and mental health variables to help identify the at risk groups. It was noted that following release from prison, one in 15 ex-prisoners attended an ED due to self-harm. The study highlights that the transition from prison to the community is particularly difficult for those with a history of mental health issues however, these self-harm presentations at ED provide key opportunities for suicide prevention. Additionally, the study concluded that self-harm reduction strategies could be implemented while the individual is still in prison and/or at the point of release.

Reference

Borschmann R, Thomas E, Moran P, Carroll M, Heffernan E, Spittal M J, Sutherland G, Alati R and Kinner S A. Self-harm following release from prison: A prospective data linkage study. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2017, Vol. 51(3) 250–259. [DOI: 10.1177/0004867416640090](https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867416640090)