

# HIV-related knowledge and attitudes among Indonesian prison officers

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Prison officers have a vital role in running a secure and healthy living environment for the inmates. The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between HIV/AIDS-related knowledge and attitude towards inmates living with HIV among the officers in an Indonesian narcotics prison.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A total of 93 officers from a narcotics prison in Bandung, Indonesia voluntarily participated in this cross-sectional study by completing a self-reported questionnaire. A Prior focus group discussion was also held among selected participants.

**Findings** – Statistical data analyses indicate that all domains of HIV/AIDS-related knowledge, i.e. knowledge of HIV-transmission, general HIV/AIDS knowledge and knowledge of HIV-prevention, have substantial positive correlations with the prison officers' attitude towards inmates living with HIV. These results show that the more knowledgeable the officers are, the less likely they are to respond in an unfavourable manner to inmates living with HIV and vice versa.

**Research limitations/implications** – Despite the limited participants involved in this study, the knowledge gaps that are identified in this study should be the starting point for the development of educational interventions for prison officers.

**Practical implications** – Sufficient educational programs and the latest materials need to be made available within the prison.

**Social implications** – Commitment from prison authorities as well as a proper policy are also needed.

**Originality/value** – This study helped prison authorities to identify areas for knowledge development of the officers. Hopefully the positive attitude towards inmates living with HIV will be developed.

**Keywords** Attitudes, HIV/AIDS, Inmates, Knowledge, Prison officers, Prisons, Prison service

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Prisons are potentially a high-risk environment for the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV), especially in low and middle income countries, such as Indonesia (UNAIDS/WHO, 2009). The prevalence of people living with HIV and HCV in Indonesian prisons has been found to be considerably higher than among the general population (Djauzi, 2009; Dolan *et al.*, 2007; Directorate of Correction Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2010; Nelwan *et al.*, 2010).

In Indonesia, there is a specific type of prison called a narcotics prison. This type of prison houses inmates who are arrested for drug-related crimes, including producing, dealing, possessing or using illicit drugs (Directorate of Correction Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2010). The narcotics prison specializes in accommodating convicted male inmates. Female inmates, including those who are arrested for drug-related crimes, are incarcerated in specialist female prisons. The narcotics prisons, which are located in big cities in Indonesia, are rapidly becoming full, with the number of inmates exceeding the capacity of the prisons. These conditions promote the transmission of diseases among the inmates, including HIV (Djauzi, 2009).