

THE HEP C DRUG TREATMENT PROVIDERS FORUM HCV TESTING WEEKS

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Background:

≈90% of HCV infection in England is attributed to injection drug use (IDU), highlighting the critical role of drug and alcohol services in testing for HCV and linking to care those with active HCV infection. However, challenges of the pandemic saw a sharp fall in the number of HCV tests carried out between March–August 2020 in drug treatment services (DTS).

Description of model of care/intervention:

The Hep C Drug Treatment Providers Forum was set up in 2020 as a partnership between NHS England, Turning Point, NHS Addictions Provider Alliance (17 NHS Trusts, headed up by Inclusion) Change Grow Live, Humankind, We Are With You, The Hepatitis C Trust and Gilead Sciences Ltd in response to the need for DTS to come together with a united approach to achieve HCV elimination in DTS. In 2021, through consensus and collaboration, the Forum developed a calendar of HCV testing events to raise awareness of, and increase the number of individuals being tested for, HCV in member DTS.

Effectiveness:

High numbers of HCV tests were reported in member DTS during or immediately following the months of Forum-led HCV testing events: 3,982 tests in May 2021; 4,582 tests in July 2021; and 4,830 tests in November 2021. In total, 41,506 HCV tests were carried out in member DTS in 2021 – up 117% from 2020 (n=19,114). Across the three member DTS providers reporting HCV treatment initiation data, there were 2,135 new patient starts in 2021, compared to 1,726 in 2020.

Conclusion and next steps:

Enhanced collaboration between providers and an effective system-wide partnership has resulted in increased testing in member DTS throughout 2021, enhanced by increased testing during HCV testing weeks. With sights fixed firmly on achieving elimination in DTS, the Forum will again be leading a schedule of HCV testing events in 2022.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Gilead funds, and plays an active role in the design and execution of, the HCV elimination activities within the named DTS providers, as part of the NHS England HCV Elimination Program.