

GETTING ACCESS TO HCV TREATMENT AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN MALAYSIA, A COMMUNITY LED QUALITATIVE STUDY.

Chen M¹, Low CP¹, Kwan WK¹, Jonet Y¹ &, Boscardin H²

¹Positive Malaysia Treatment Access & Advocacy Group (MTAAG+), ²Coalition Plus

Background:

Before the issuance of compulsory license for Sofosbuvir in 2017, Hepatitis C was not a priority topic in Malaysia and treatment remained inaccessible to most. The generic sofosbuvir was officially received by Ministry of Health in March 2018 and treatment to HCV was made available to 18 public hospitals nationwide. By mid-2019, the number of government hospitals and clinics has been increased to 48.

In line with this development, MTAAG+ with support from Coalition Plus and partnership with NGOs in Peninsular Malaysia started a study to understand how far the People who inject drugs in Malaysia could access HCV treatment. The focus of this study was patients diagnosed for at least six months but not yet able to access treatment.

Methods:

The participants were recruited by local NGO and briefed by the interviewers about the study project and signed a consent form. Interviewing sessions were conducted on one-to-one basis with a set of one-hour long questionnaires. 51 participants participated in the interview session from the North, South, Central and East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Participants were asked how long they have been diagnosed with HCV.

Results:

27% or 14 respondents have been diagnosed with HCV for 10 years or more and 73% or 37 respondents were living with HCV for less than 10 years. Out of 14 respondents, 2 of them were living with HCV for more than 20 years and yet to get access to treatment. 8% or 4 of them had HCV in between 15 to 20 years and has not start treatment yet. Another 8 or 16% has been diagnosed between 10 to 14 years. 18 respondents or 35% living with HCV between 5 to 9 years and 19 respondents or 37% were having HCV for less than 4 years.

Conclusions:

The study shows that despite the availability of the generics DAAs and an increasing number of government hospitals and clinics treating Hepatitis C, PWIDs are still not accessing the much needed Hepatitis C treatment

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Funding by Coalition PLUS, through UNITAID.