

HIGH BURDEN OF BLOOD-BORNE VIRAL INFECTIONS (HCV, HIV, HBV) AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS - FIRST RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY IN BERLIN, GERMANY

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Background:

People experiencing homelessness (PEH) are at increased risk of infection with blood-borne viral infections (BBV) and sexually transmitted infections (STI), due to precarious living conditions and associated risk factors (e.g. drug/alcohol use, sexual risk behavior, incarceration). In Germany, there are app. 417.000 PEH, however, there is little data available on the burden of these infections among this group. We conducted a pilot study in Berlin in order to assess prevalence of BBV and STI in this population.

Methods:

A multicentre cross-sectional pilot study was conducted between April and June 2021. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire-based interview, serological testing for HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C (if seropositive corresponding RNA determinations) and syphilis and Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests (NAAT) from urine for gonococcal and chlamydia.

Results:

216 participants were included in the analysis. Mean age: 41 years (range 19-68). Male: 191 (88.4 %), female: 24 (11.5 %) and gender diverse: 1 (0.5 %). 57 (26.8 %) participants were born in Germany. Reported homelessness <1 year was 29.4 %, for about 1-5 years: 42.5 %, more than 6 to over 10 years: 27.1 %. Drug use: 154 (71.6%) and 153 (71.5 %) were at least once incarcerated. 123 (56.9 %) had no health insurance. HCV-RNA was found in 34 (16.0%), 4 (1.9%) were HBsAg positive. HIV was detected in 6 (2.8%). Active syphilis was found in 3 (1.4%), while gonococcal infections were seen in 4 (2,0%) and chlamydial infections in 6 (3,0%).

Conclusion:

PEH in Berlin have a high prevalence of BBV and STI. There is a need to improve awareness, access to treatment and care for this population and to include them in national elimination strategies for HCV, HBV and HIV. As more data is needed, a nationwide expansion of the POINT study is planned.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None