

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HEPATITIS C TESTING UPTAKE AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT IMAGE AND PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS.

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Background:

Historically, people who inject image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs) were not perceived as being at high risk of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. However, recent UK studies indicate the HCV antibody prevalence in this group (around 5%) is about 10-times that in the general population. Worryingly, the majority of HCV infections remain undiagnosed. We examined HCV testing uptake using survey data.

Methods:

People who inject IPEDs, recruited from community settings and needle-syringe programmes (NSPs) across England, Scotland and Wales during 2016, self-completed a behavioural questionnaire. Factors associated with ever being HCV tested were examined using multivariate analysis. Potential missed testing opportunities were also explored.

Results:

The participants' (N=580; 24% NSP recruited) median age was 31 years, 97% were men, 4.4% identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), 17% had ever been imprisoned, and 5.7% had ever injected a psychoactive drug. Overall, 31% had ever been tested for HCV (for 60% their most recent test was during 2014-16). Testing was associated with identifying as LGB (AOR=5.9, 95%CI 2.5-14); ever injecting a psychoactive drug (AOR=2.2, 95%CI 1.03-5.0); NSP recruitment (AOR=3.1, 95%CI 2.0-4.7); injecting peptide-hormones and allied drugs (AOR=2.0 95%CI 1.4-2.9); and ever imprisonment (AOR=2.2, 95%CI 1.4-3.6). Of those never tested, 50% had used a health service during the preceding year where they could have been tested (41% had used primary care). Overall, 14% had ever shared a drugs vial (10% NSP recruited vs. 16% community recruited, $p=0.084$).

Conclusion:

Majority are untested, with testing associated with other risks: injecting psychoactive drugs and imprisonment. Previous studies of this group have focused recruitment on NSPs, potentially over-estimating testing uptake and the proportion aware of their HCV status. Targeted HCV testing interventions, focused on those not using NSPs, or without a history of psychoactive drug injection or imprisonment, are needed for those injecting IPEDs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

We have no disclosures.