

TITLE: PATIENTS' REPORTED EXPERIENCES WITH DIRECT ACTING ANTIVIRAL THERAPY IN AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF HEPATITIS C CARE IN PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

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Background Patients' reported experience measurements (PREMs) are critical for engagement in hepatitis C (HCV) therapy in hard-to-reach populations. However, there is no data on patient reported experience with direct acting antiviral (DAA) therapy among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Italy. We assessed PREs with DAA treatment within the context of an optimization strategy of HCV identification and treatment among PWID in Tuscany Region, Italy.

Methods Within the context of an ongoing cohort prospective study, 72 patients from 3 health districts received DAA therapy from 05/2021 to 01/2022. PREMs were assessed before the beginning of the therapy, addressing several domains (socio-demographic features, HCV history and diagnosis, relationship with the healthcare professionals, timeliness of diagnosis and treatment, health status perceived). Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the PWID cohort. Update of results is still in progress.

Results A total of 70 patients completed the questionnaire (response rate 97.2%), of which 18 patients (25.7%) reported drug use (94.4% male). Most represented age group among PWID was 33-53 (median age 51.5 years, against the 64 years of general population). Middle school diploma was the most common level of education among PWID (61.1%). PREMs evaluating the linkage to care before DAA therapy were as follow: 77.8% reported to having felt accompanied by the specialist doctor in the linkage to care, 77,8% obtained a specialistic visit within two weeks from the diagnostic test; 41.1% reported an overall good health status and 41.2% reported functional limitations due to the HCV infection.

Conclusions

PREMs showed an overall weaker health status reported by PWID but HCV healthcare services appeared to be responsive for PWID as for general population. As PREMs are key for engagement in HCV therapy, tailored testing and treatment interventions could represent a model of HCV linkage to care to enhance treatment uptake in patients experiencing drug use.

Conflict of interest

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