

## HEPATITIS DELTA VIRUS: A SILENT THREAT TO PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

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### **Background:**

Hepatitis delta virus (HDV), a co-infection of hepatitis B virus (HBV), results in the most severe form of viral hepatitis known to humans and poses an increased risk of progression to liver cirrhosis and cancer than HBV alone. Due to general lack of patient and provider awareness, limited access to testing, and a historical dearth of viable treatments, HDV is significantly under-diagnosed. People who inject drugs face increased risk for HBV/HDV co-infection, and studies show increasing infection rates within this community in recent years.

### **Description of Intervention:**

Given the heightened risk of HDV for those who inject drugs, integration of HDV as a priority infectious disease into harm reduction and addiction services settings is of utmost importance. Hepatitis Delta Connect is a community- and provider-focused education program that provides patient support and in-language information about HDV disease risk, prevention, testing, and linkage to care, and serves as an advocacy platform for prioritization of HDV as an under-appreciated viral infection.

### **Effectiveness:**

Since 2016, Hepatitis Delta Connect has educated 13,000 people in 111 countries and has partnered with different community-based organizations to integrate hepatitis delta education into existing hepatitis B programs. The primary challenges in implementation include low awareness, funding constraints, and limited access to testing and treatment.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps:**

Hep Delta Connect contributes to greater HDV awareness, testing, and surveillance, and can aid in the creation of standardized global screening guidelines. This presentation will describe how HDV services can be incorporated into existing harm reduction programs, an important first step to curbing the HDV epidemic and saving lives.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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