

HEPATITIS C VIRUS TESTING UPTAKE AMONG HOSPITALIZED PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS: OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THE HCV CARE CONTINUUM

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Background:

Hospitalization can be an opportunity for HCV testing among people who inject drugs (PWID). Prior to a trial of immediate HCV treatment among hospitalized PWID (OPPORTUNI-C) we launched a campaign targeting hospital staff to increase awareness of HCV infection. The aim of this study was to assess HCV testing uptake before and after the campaign.

Methods:

A random sample of individuals with a history of injecting drug use admitted for inpatient care at departments of internal medicine and psychiatry, Lovisenberg Diaconal Hospital, within calendar years 2018 (before campaign) and 2020 (after campaign) were identified by relevant ICD-10 codes for injecting drug use and injection-related infectious diseases. Injecting drug use was confirmed by review of the electronic patient files. Data on HCV testing, socio-demographics, drug- and alcohol use, and discharge diagnoses were registered.

Results:

Testing uptake during hospitalization increased from 35% (43 of 122) in 2018 to 56% (70 of 126) in 2020 (OR 2.4; 95% CI 1.4-4.0). The increase in testing was more pronounced in psychiatry (OR 3.0; 95% CI 1.4-6.4) than in internal medicine (OR 2.0; 95% CI 0.95-4.2). HCV testing in 2018 was associated with current opioid agonist treatment (OR 3.4; 95% CI 1.3-8.7) while testing in 2020 was associated with increasing number of hospital admissions that year (OR 1.8 per admission; 95% CI 1.3-2.6). Testing was not associated with age, gender, housing status, nor recent injecting drug use. Improved testing was most prominent among amphetamine users, increasing from 24% (10 of 41) in 2018 to 52% (25 of 48) in 2020. HCV RNA prevalence among tested individuals decreased from 23% (10 of 43) in 2018 to 13% (9 of 58) in 2020.

Conclusion:

HCV testing uptake increased among hospitalized PWID following an HCV awareness campaign. Hospitalization is an excellent opportunity to improve HCV testing uptake among PWID.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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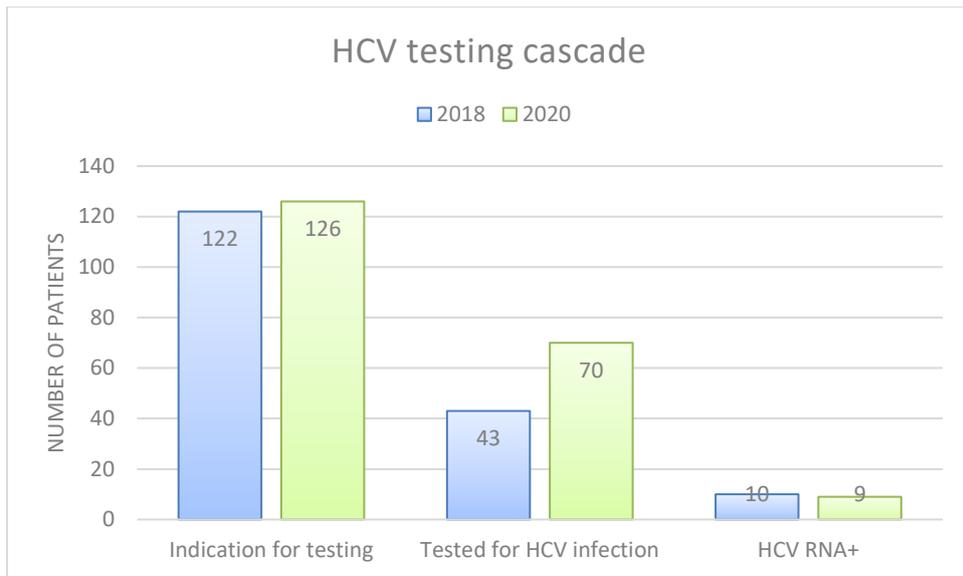


Figure. The 2018 and 2020 HCV testing cascade.