**BEYOND CLINICAL OUTCOMES: IMPACT AND WIDER SOCIAL AND HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IMPLICATIONS OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS (HCV) TREATMENT AND CURE**

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**Background:** This research explored enablers of HCV treatment initiation and perceptions of HCV treatment impact among people who inject drugs (PWID). The research identified opportunities for social policy and healthcare systems to better engage and support PWID by leveraging HCV treatment to improve a person's overall health and wellbeing.

**Methods:** A two-part study involving 188 participants.

Part 1: Qualitative face-to-face interviews with people who currently or previously injected drugs and who had a diagnosis of HCV across Europe (N=64). The majority had received and completed or were currently on direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment (N=48); the remainder had not received HCV treatment (N=16). All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

Part 2: Quantitative survey administered face-to-face with PWID across Europe (N=124). All respondents had injected opioids or stimulants (currently or in the past) and had received and completed DAA treatment.

**Results:** Most participants reported that they initiated treatment due to awareness of well-tolerated (77%) and effective (75%) treatments. The majority agreed that a supportive healthcare professional (HCP) who makes them feel valued (93%) and HCPs taking responsibility for the logistics (81%) were important in facilitating treatment. Following treatment completion, opioid users (40%) and stimulant users (48%) at the start of treatment stopped or reduced use. Participants reported feeling happy (73%), that there was a positive impact on their psychological/mental health (60%) and that they had started at least one new activity (58%): patient advocacy, 30%; an education/training course, 19%; new employment, 19%.

**Conclusion:** The benefits of HCV treatment and cure go beyond clinical outcomes and are linked to improved drug-user health – including their emotional well-being and engagement in wider society. Sharing information about well-tolerated and effective HCV treatments and enabling more meaningful HCP-patient engagement are key considerations for future models of care to improve the health of this population.

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