

COMBINED COVID-19 VACCINATION AND HEPATITIS C VIRUS AND HIV SCREENING INTERVENTION FOR HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS AT A MOBILE TESTING UNIT IN MADRID, SPAIN

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Background:

COVID-19 has hindered efforts to address hepatitis C virus (HCV) and HIV by reducing testing, particularly in marginalised groups, who have some of the highest rates of HCV and HIV and lowest rates of COVID-19 vaccination.

Description of model of care/intervention:

We explored the acceptability of combining HCV point-of-care testing (PoCT) with COVID-19 vaccination in a mobile testing unit in Madrid, Spain. During 28/9/2021-26/10/2021, 101 individuals from high-risk populations, including people with substance use disorders (SUDs), were invited to get the COVID-19 vaccine along with HCV antibody (Ab) screening. If HCV Ab+, they were offered HCV-RNA PoCT. Everyone was screened for HIV, as per the standard of care. HCV-RNA+ and HIV+ patients not on antiretroviral therapy (ART) were linked to care.

Effectiveness:

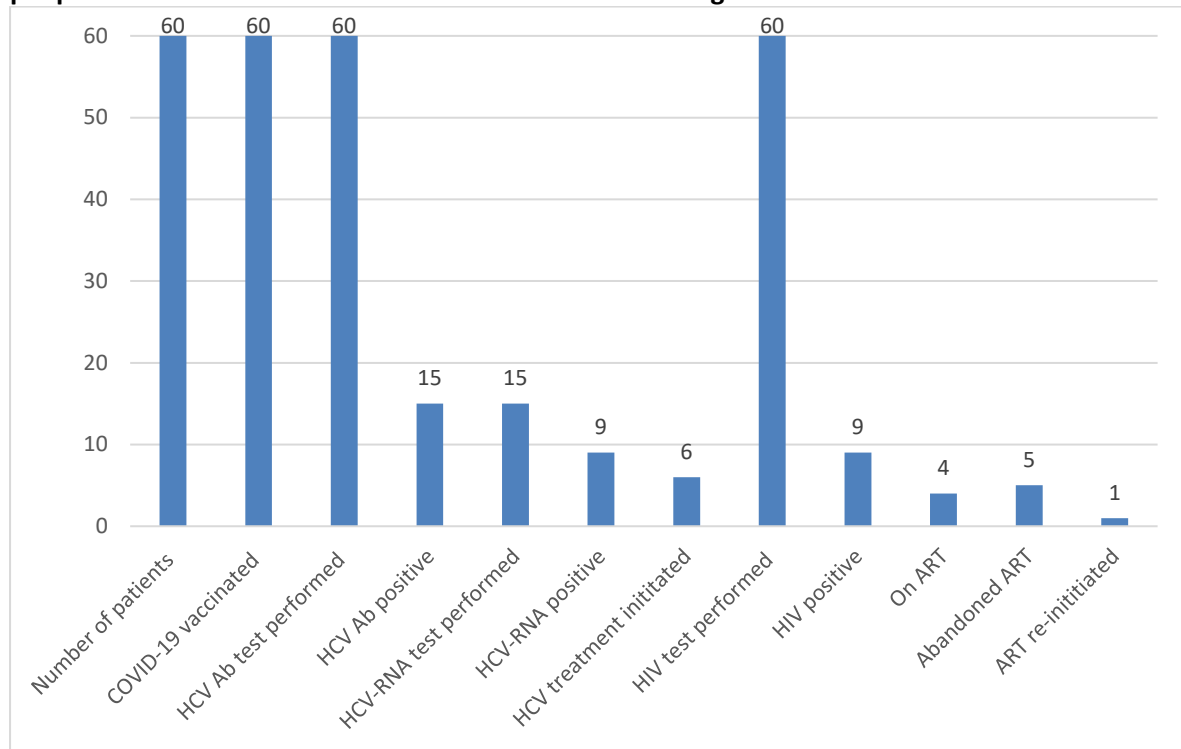
Of the 101 participants, 59.4% had SUDs (68.3% male), of which 3.3% reported a previous COVID-19 diagnosis, none had been vaccinated for COVID-19 and all received the Janssen vaccine without any identified adverse events (Figure). All were tested for HCV Ab and HIV and 25.0% and 15.0% were positive, respectively. Of those HCV Ab+, all were tested for HCV-RNA and 60.0% were positive, of which 44.4% were probable reinfection cases. Of those HIV+, none were new diagnoses and 55.6% had abandoned ART. To date, 66.7% have started HCV treatment and 20.0% have re-started ART.

Conclusion and next steps:

The intervention had an acceptability rate of 100% and was safe, as no adverse events to HCV testing were reported. It also optimised participants' time use as they would have been waiting for HCV/HIV test results and it prevented the need for multiple visits. This approach can serve as an example of a novel model of care to increase HCV/HIV screening and care linkage, along with COVID-19 vaccination, in high-risk populations. Next steps include continuing treatment initiation and monitoring.

Figure:

Figure. Analysis of the combined COVID-19 vaccination and HCV and HIV screening intervention in people with substance user disorders at the mobile testing unit in Madrid



Abbreviations: Ab, antibody; ART; antiretroviral therapy; HCV, hepatitis C virus.

Disclosure of interest Statement:

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