

A NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS SUCCESSFULLY PRODUCED A STATE WIDE AUTHENTICATED HCV PREVALENCE DATA AMONG PWIDS AND THEIR SPOUSES. THE ONLY STATE DATA EVER PRODUCED IN MANIPUR, INDIA.

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Background: Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a critical health concern among people who inject drugs (PWIDs) in the state of Manipur. Yet, the true extent of the epidemic is difficult to gauge because surveillance systems do not exist. CoNE conducted a serological study aiming to produce a state authenticated HCV prevalence data among PWIDs and their spouses.

Methods: From July to December 2018, CoNE conducted awareness and screening camps with the objective stated above after obtaining an ethical clearance from relevant authorities within the Government of India. PWID were identified through CoNE's network in 9 sites in central and remote districts of Manipur. The model was structured as follows: firstly, HCV awareness sessions were organized to ensure understanding. Secondly, a group counselling session was organized to help individuals to come forward for HCV screening. Whole blood samples were collected for antibody testing. The process was accompanied by a pre and post questionnaire to evaluate the increase in awareness.

Results: 70 awareness and screening camps were conducted overall. 2597 people (1884 PWID and 334 Spouses) attended the awareness sessions and 2219 people came forward for voluntary HCV antibody screening. 956 people (43.1%) were found reactive. Among them, 97.6 % are male and 2.4% are female. PWIDs were 7 times more likely to have HCV infection than their spouses. Level of awareness on HCV among PWIDs and their spouses is still limited including knowledge on risk factors and on the importance of early diagnosis and treatment.

Conclusion: These numbers/figures are sufficient to be included in a representative study on PWIDs and their spouses across the state of Manipur.

Findings will be used to support advocacy and planning for implementation of policies to scale up access to HCV testing and treatment among PWIDs.

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