

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO HEPATITIS C IN PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS, IN PEREIRA, COLOMBIA.

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Background: Since 1999, Temeride Corporation (a civil society organization) works with PWID in Pereira city (Risaralda), one of the cities with the highest rate of injecting drug use in Colombia. Since 2016, Temeride is a member of the Regálate Un Minuto campaign, a nationwide project that advocates for access to diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C in Colombia, which is funded by Coalition Plus and coordinated by IFARMA Foundation.

Description of model of care/intervention: Temeride has implemented harm reduction programs, including, delivery of safe injection kits, used syringes collection, and application of rapid HIV and HCV tests, health education strategies on prevention of communicable diseases, overdoses and hazardous waste management. Temeride has participated in epidemiological studies on HIV and HCV in PWID.

Effectiveness: In the last 11 years, Temeride identified 1,040 people who use heroin. Of them, 60% were homeless; 35% did not have identification documents, and did not have access to healthcare; about 60% reuse syringes, and 90% of the women turn to prostitute to get a dose. In 2014, the estimated prevalence of HIV in PWID in Pereira was 8.4% and 44.4% for HCV. The community work made possible to reduce the incidence of HIV by 3.6% in 2017, and to increase the diagnosis of hepatitis C in PWID. Moreover, the population is now aware about the HCV infection, risk factors, and how to access care within the health system.

Conclusion and next steps: Temeride has contributed for the articulation of the civil society and territorial health entities activities. As a result, the healthcare of people with HCV is now part of the local public policy agenda. Temeride will continue advocating for the guarantee of access to diagnosis and treatment of HCV and HIV/HCV coinfection and to overcome the access barriers to healthcare faced by PWIDs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the development of the article.