

SNAPSHOT OF FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVES ON HEPATITIS C SERVICES FOR MOST-AT-RISK POPULATIONS IN MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES: INFORMING PROGRESS AND RESPONSE TOWARD 2030 ELIMINATION TARGETS

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Background:

In the context of the WHO Global Hepatitis Strategy's 2030 elimination targets, governments are responsible to implement policies to overcome barriers to access to HCV care, while communities must be involved and empowered. Since community involvement is fundamental for elimination, this community-based research aimed to explore experiences and perspectives of key populations (PLHIV, PWID) and healthcare workers (HCW) regarding current provision of HCV services and identify policies necessary for elimination.

Methods:

A qualitative (focus groups discussions (FGD) and structured interviews), exploratory cross-sectional study was conducted in 5 countries included in Coalition PLUS's HIV/HCV Drug Affordability project (India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Morocco). To ensure inclusion of persons at different stages along the patient pathway, stratified random sampling and purposive sampling was used to form focus groups. Purposive selection was employed for study center identification.

We conducted:

- 25 FGD with 200 HCV patients and/or most-at-risk individuals
- Structured interviews with 48 HCW providing HCV-related services (i.e. health facility managers, specialists, general practitioners, nurses).

Results:

The data collection phase is complete and results are expected in June 2018. The primary aim of data analysis is to identify trends concerning HCV care for communities. The study will:

- document perceived barriers on the pathway to elimination
- provide a baseline snapshot of patients experience
- compare patients/at-risk-populations and HCW experiences and perspectives
- provide WHO, governments and service providers with community-based recommendations

Conclusion:

Findings will be used to support global and country-level advocacy and planning for implementation of policies and initiatives to scale up HCV care access for key populations towards elimination. Study tools are available to organisations outside the current scope of this survey to maximize the study's impact and provide community-based accounts on progress towards 2030 targets to the 2021 World Health Assembly.

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