MICRO-ELIMINATION OF HEPATITIS C AMONG INCARCERATED POPULATION: THE INTERVENTION ACCESS4ALL IN A LARGE PRISON OF THESSALONIKI, GREECE

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BACKGROUND

The prevalence of hepatitis C (HCV) in Greece is about 1%. Incarcerated people are considered as a population at high risk of HCV infection due to significant rate of persons who inject drugs (PWID) in prisons and the practices which enable the transmission of HCV in this environment. Moreover, the transmission of HCV in community continues once they discharged. The principal aim of the intervention "Access4All" is to facilitate the access of incarcerated people to the effective antiviral therapies, and, finally, the elimination of HCV infection.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVENTION

This intervention is implemented for the first time in Greece. Initially, all incarcerated people were universally tested for anti-HCV with rapid test. The patients, who had a positive rapid test, underwent the appropriate blood tests in the area of prison in order to be tested for HCV RNA, HCV genotype, complete blood count, biochemistry profile, INR and a-fetoprotein. The samples were analyzed in the laboratory of Hippokration General Hospital of Thessaloniki. The evaluation of liver fibrosis was estimated with the non-invasive markers APRI and FIB-4. The hepatology clinic was in charge of recording the patients' history and registering them to the HCV Platform of Health Ministry so as the therapies to be approved and subsidized. After the approval, the medications were distributed on site to the patients, who were informed about the follow-up. Another RNA test was scheduled to evaluate sustained virologic response (SVR12).

EFFECTIVENESS

In the first phase (January 2019), 580 incarcerated people were screened. Among them, 82 were positive for HCV (14.14%), 16 for HBV (2.41%) and 4 for HIV (0.69%), while 13 refused the test. The HCV RNA was positive in 80/82 patients (97.56%). There were 6.7% cirrhotics. The distribution of genotype is represented in the chart below. Therapy was approved for 41 patients as in 20 therapy could not be subsidized due to lack of Social Security Number (SSN), 16 were released, 2 had low viral load and 1 refused therapy. SVR12 is expected. In the second phase (July 2019) ?? New incarcerated people were screened and 37 had positive rapid test. Because of lack of lack of Social Security Number, only 17 were tested completely. HCV RNA was positive in 15/17 (88.24%). Genotype and therapy approval are expected.

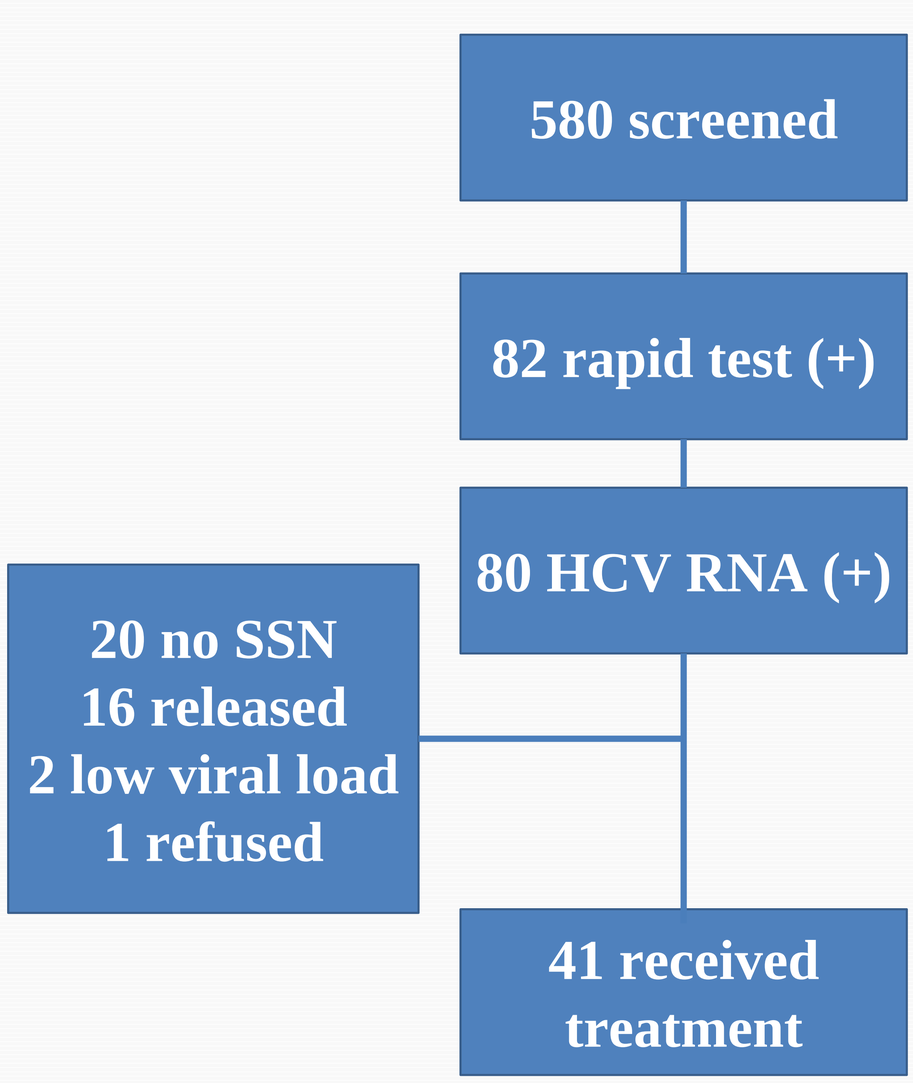

Figure 1 – First phase of intervention

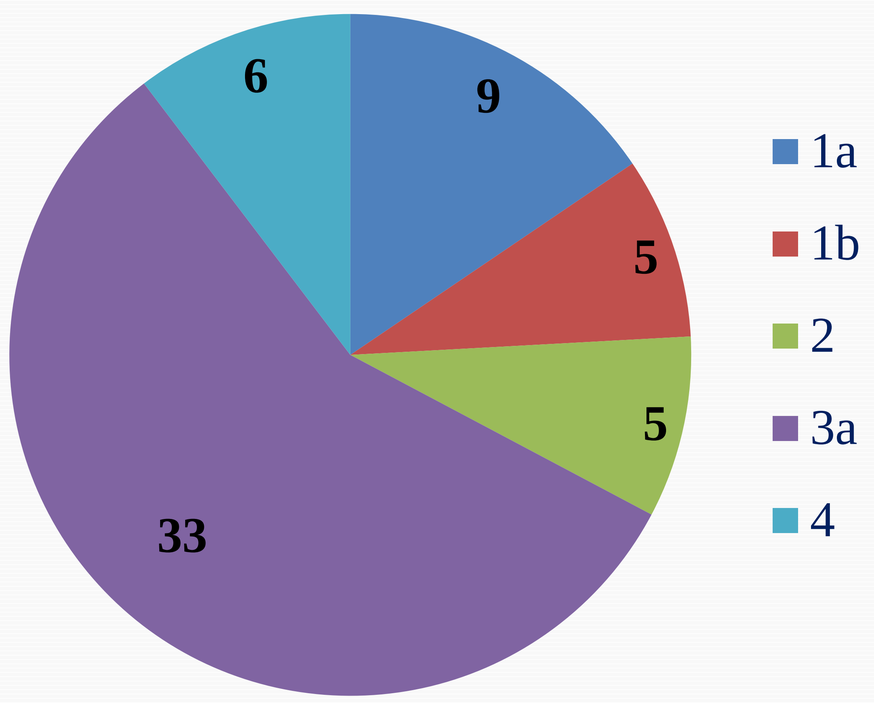

Figure 2 – Genotype distribution

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The prevalence of HCV infection in prisons is remarkably high in Greece and this intervention is an important step towards HCV elimination. It is crucial Access4All be implemented periodically to be really effective because prison's population is continuously renewed. Moreover, this intervention should be also implemented in the others Greek prisons, not only in Thessaloniki, so all incarcerated people could be tested and treated. Action needed in order to overcome last barriers in HCV treatment initiation to all infected people without limitations.