

PATIENT REPORTED OUTCOMES OF RECOVERY AND QUALITY OF LIFE POST HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

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Background:

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is a global health burden, with most infections found among people who inject drugs (PWID). While Direct Acting Antivirals (DAA) treatment now offers a speedy (8-12 weeks) and effective (95%) HCV cure, patient reported long term outcomes require greater understanding. Most research to date is based on short follow-up periods (<12 months) and lack focus on DAA treatment. We report on patients' perspectives on their quality of life up to 24 months after treatment with DDAs.

Methods:

We conducted a qualitative study with 30 patients who had been cured of HCV, with a mean follow-up time of 18 months. Most interviewees were male, older (36-55 years), and were treated in urban community-based needle and syringe exchanges in, Tayside, Scotland. All interviews were semi-structured, conducted over the phone, and analysed thematically.

Results:

Most interviewees reported positive recovery outcomes including improved physical and mental health, increased social contacts, motivation to stay drug free, and engage with social and healthcare services. One third of interviewees, however, reported poor quality of life post recovery from HCV. Some lost contact with their drug using social networks and became isolated. Poor mental health and lack of contact with services were commonly reported. Many sought help from services however found this challenging to navigate.

Conclusion:

Whilst DAA treatment of HCV is successful in the short-term, long-term recovery from substance use undoubtedly compromises these gains. Greater effort is required to address the long-term issues of social isolation and lack of services that strengthen 'social' recovery in the community. These could comprise access to local recovery groups and gateway services to improve life chances such as better housing, further education, and where appropriate employment opportunities.

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