

MOST AT RISK POPULATIONS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS PERSPECTIVES ON EXISTING SERVICES FOR HEPATITIS C CARE AND SUPPORT IN MALAYSIA

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Background: In Malaysia, 380,000 patients are living with Hepatitis C (HCV), 2,000 new cases reported every year and 1,501 HCV patients treated (year 2018). Government started providing 12 weeks generic Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs) treatment in March 2018. As government seeks to improve its policies, it is essential to hear from Hepatitis C patients and at-risk populations like people who inject drugs (PWID) and HCV Healthcare Workers (HCW) to ensure that there is a good understanding of the reality which patients face in seeking information, getting diagnosis and receiving treatments.

Methods: Malaysia represents one of the six-sites study for which Coalition PLUS has presented a multi-country study abstract at INHSU 2018. 3 Focus group discussions (FGD) with 9 to 15 PWIDs each were organized to hear directly from HCV patients and/or at-risk populations PWID. 11 Healthcare Workers (HCW) providing HCV services were interviewed one-on-one. Through these, MTAAG+ aimed at finding out what are the key bottlenecks experienced by patients along the HCV treatment pathway. Additionally, the critical barriers currently restricting efforts to progress in HCV elimination were documented.

Results: 38 PWIDs from 3 Malaysian states participated in the FGD, age ranging from 20 to 60 years old and either from private or government funded rehabilitation centers. 11 HCWs of various disciplines were recruited, age ranging from 20 to 50 years old, either from community base organization, private or government healthcare facility at different cities in Selangor and Federal District.

Conclusion: Majority participants demonstrated lack of knowledge on the HCV treatment pathway, especially access to free HCV testing and treatment as patient rights. Majority HCWs are concerned lack of HCV care and support capacity at various healthcare facilities. Scaling up HCV awareness is a must to efficiently target at-risk populations.

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