

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO OPT-OUT HEPATITIS C VIRUS SCREENING IN PROVINCIAL PRISONS IN QUEBEC, CANADA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH PRISON-BASED HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS USING THE THEORETICAL DOMAINS FRAMEWORK

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Background: Microelimination of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in correctional settings is dependent on offering systematic HCV screening. We sought to identify barriers and enablers of implementing opt-out HCV screening in provincial prisons in Quebec, Canada from the perspective of prison-based healthcare professionals (HCPs).

Methods: We conducted a qualitative study using the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) to identify factors influencing HCPs' likelihood of offering opt-out screening in provincial prisons. The TDF synthesizes constructs from 33 behaviour change theories into 14 domains representing individual, socio-cultural, and environmental influences on individual behaviours. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using videoconference or telephone (COVID-19 restrictions) with physicians and nurses from four prisons with different HCV screening strategies (i.e., opt-in, risk-based, or on-demand). Directed content analysis was used and key TDF domains were identified.

Results: From April 16 to May 14, 2021, eight HCPs (four physicians, four nurses) were interviewed. Six TDF domains relevant to implementation of opt-out HCV screening were identified: *Beliefs about consequences* (mixed = barrier and enabler), *Environmental context and resources* (barrier), *Social influences* (barrier), *Optimism* (mixed), *Emotions* (mixed), and *Behavioural regulation* (barrier). While most HCPs were enthusiastic about the outcomes of opt-out screening (e.g., detecting more cases, decreasing HCV transmission) many were concerned about the potential for increased workload, the additional collaboration with correctional guards, and the lack of resources (e.g., office space, healthcare personnel, etc.) and collaboration with correctional employees.

Conclusion: The barriers and enablers identified indicate HCP interest in implementing opt-out HCV screening in Quebec provincial prisons, but simultaneously suggest the importance of considering a wide range of factors (e.g., human, financial, and material resources) before implementation.

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