BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE & ENHANCING LINKAGE TO HEPATITIS C CARE AFTER PRISON RELEASE: THE TEST LINK CALL PROJECT

Authors:
Bartlett S[1,2], Young P[3], Korchinski M[3], Desrosiers N[4], Ang R[4], Esmail Z[4], Romm D[4], Luster D[5], Schmitz D[5], Yu A, [1] Alvarez M[1], Martin RE[2], Buxton J[1,2], Wong J[1,2], Young S[2], Janjua N[1,2]

[1]British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, Vancouver, Canada
[2]University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
[3]Unlocking the Gates Services Society, Maple Ridge, Canada
[4]British Columbia Mental Health and Substance Use Services, Vancouver, Canada
[5]BC Hepatitis Network, Richmond, Canada

Background:
Enhancing linkage to care for people living with hepatitis C virus (HCV) after leaving prison is crucial to ensure treatment continuity or access to treatment. People leaving prison frequently have no mobile phone or contact number, therefore referral to community services or HCV treatment providers after release is challenging. We launched a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) project to address this.

Description of model of care/intervention:
People in British Columbia (BC) Provincial Correctional Centres (PCCs) with HCV infection are identified by Correctional Health Services (CHS). CHS offers clients linkage to a Peer Health Mentor (PHM) and a cell phone with a 6-month plan on it, after release. CHS facilitates a call for clients to complete an interview with the PHM before release. PHMs meet clients at the PCC at release, provide cell phone, and assist with immediate needs (e.g. accommodation, transport). Clients provide consent for their new phone number to be shared with an HCV treatment provider in the community, and PHMs work with clients for up to 6 months, providing support to engage HCV care.

Effectiveness:
From October 2021 till February 2022, 11 clients consented to linkage to PHMs (Figure 1). One client is yet to be released from custody, and one withdrew consent prior to receiving their phone. Nine clients (81%) received phones and PHM support, and all saw and HCV treatment provider after. Two clients were found to be HCV RNA negative, requiring no further care. One client declined treatment, and two were lost to follow-up due to re-incarceration or warrants. Thus far, four clients (36%) have attended a further appointment for HCV treatment prescription. Two participants (18%) started HCV treatment after prison release so far.

Conclusion and next steps:
Thus far, this CQI project has demonstrated providing a cell phone and peer support at time of release from prison enhances linkage to care and HCV treatment uptake.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
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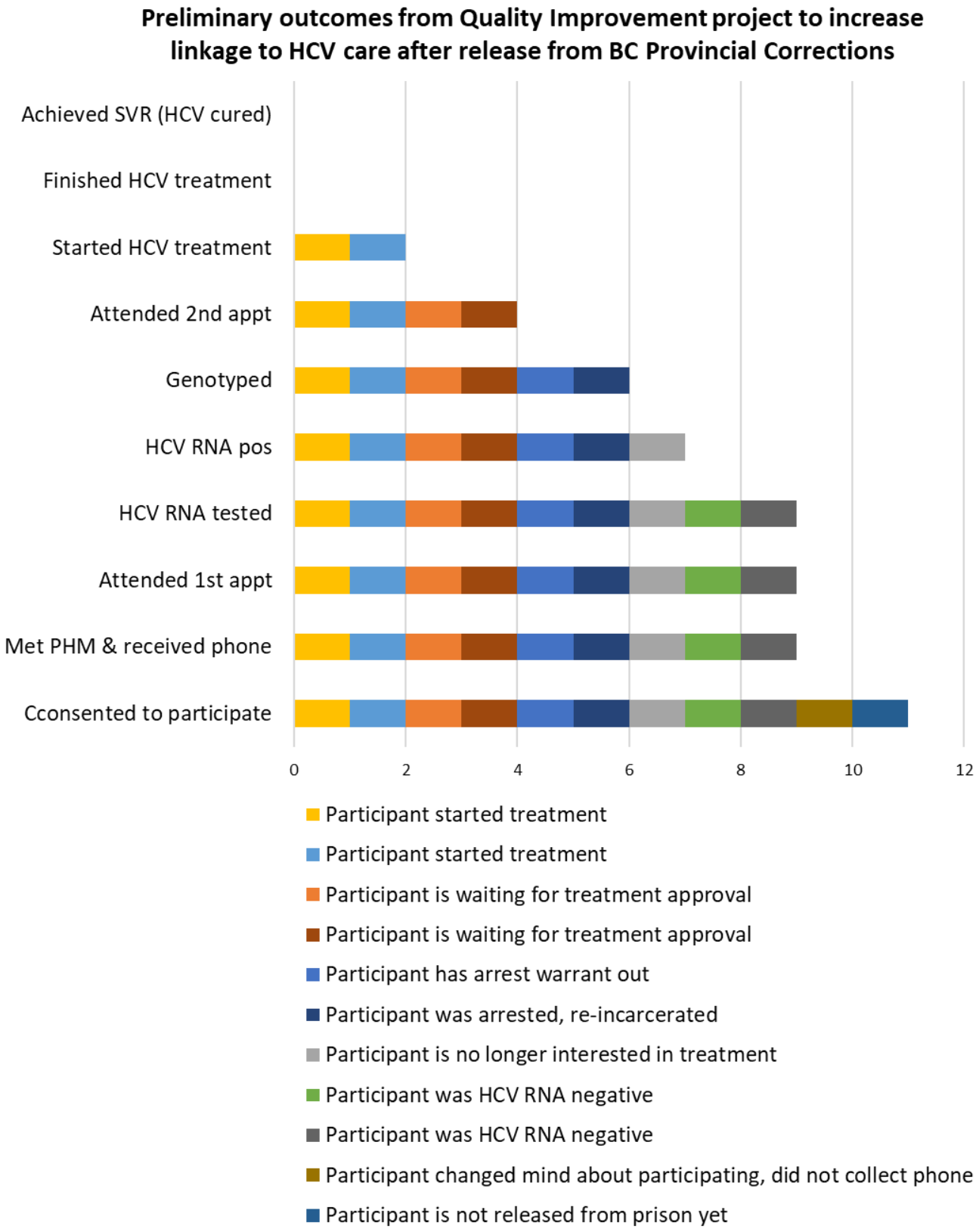
Figure 1.


Preliminary outcomes from Quality Improvement project to increase linkage to HCV care after release from BC Provincial Corrections
Achieved SVR (HCV cured)
Finished HCV treatment
Started HCV treatment
Attended 2nd appt
Genotyped
HCV RNA pos
HCV RNA tested
Attended 1st appt
Met PHM & received phone
Cconsented to participate
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
Participant started treatment
Participant started treatment
Participant is waiting for treatment approval
Participant is waiting for treatment approval
Participant has arrest warrant out
Participant was arrested, re-incarcerated
Participant is no longer interested in treatment
Participant was HCV RNA negative
Participant was HCV RNA negative
Participant changed mind about participating, did not collect phone
Participant is not released from prison yet