

HEPATITIS C DETECTION THROUGH AMBULATORY COMMUNITY BASED SCREENING - A MODEL FOR CLINICAL EFFECTIVENESS IN HCV ELIMINATION

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Background:

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a major health problem amongst people who inject drugs (PWID) and have limited contact with health care services. Halfway houses (HH) serve to reintegrate former drug users into society. Strategies to eliminate HCV must focus on screening for HCV amongst HH. The aim is to determine the sero-prevalence, demographics, disease distribution and factors associated with the risk of HCV transmission amongst former drug users at HH

Approach:

Eight HH participated in a program of HCV education, point-of-care screening using Oraquick test and staging with Fibroscan® by a small mobile team of healthcare workers. A detailed survey regarding illicit drug injecting practices was performed. Drug injecting behavior and demographic data were analysed using logistic regression with HCV status as the dependent factor.

Outcome:

196/200 screened were included for analysis. The sero-prevalence of HCV amongst halfway houses was 37.8% (95% CI, 30.9-44.9%). Mean age of was 50.2 (SD+/-11). HCV was most commonly seen in the birth cohort between 1960-1969 (37%) and more common amongst Malay (46%) vs. Chinese (25%) and Indian (38%) respondents ($p = 0.02$). Median liver stiffness measured was 9.1 kPa (Range 4.4-45kPa). 15% had advanced fibrosis and 27% were cirrhotic. On a multivariate model, Malay ethnicity, injecting drug use and the frequency of sharing of drug injecting paraphernalia were associated as independent risk factors for the acquisition of HCV.

Conclusions:

Halfway houses have a high prevalence of HCV. Advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis collectively represents 42% within this cohort. The highest risk of HCV acquisition is amongst people who inject drugs (PWID's) and frequently share drug injecting paraphernalia, with a preponderance amongst Malays. Targeted screening of HCV at HH, education of risk factors and investigation into the socio-economic background of this population would be important if HCV elimination strategy is to be successfully implemented.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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