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PREVALENCE OF HEPATITIS B AND C, HIV, AND SYPHILIS AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN GERMANY – RESULTS OF A PILOT STUDY FOR A PERIODICAL NATIONAL MONITORING SYSTEM

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Background:

To support and monitor the viral hepatitis/HIV/STI elimination process in Germany, up-to-date prevalence and behavioural data in key populations are needed on a regular basis. We piloted a future monitoring system among people who inject drugs (PWID) with the DRUCK 2.0 study in two federal states in Germany.

Methods:

PWID aged 16+ years who injected drugs within the last 12 months were recruited by time location sampling via low threshold drug services and opioid substitution treatment (OST) practices during routine services in Berlin and Bavaria between 01/06/2021 and 28/02/2022. All participants were tested for hepatitis B and C (HBV, HCV), HIV and syphilis from capillary dried blood spots and filled a questionnaire regarding sociodemographics, behaviour and access to testing/treatment, receiving a 10 Euro voucher as incentive.

Results:

In total 495 PWID were included, median age of participants was 39 years [range 18-66], 68% (336/494) were male, and 23% (114/492) were born outside Germany, mostly in eastern Europe. Injecting drug use within the last 30 days was reported by 82% (405/491), unsafe use by 58% (275/477). Detention was experienced by 77% (372/485), and 62% (304/487) were currently under OST. The prevalence was 74% (362/490) for HCV antibodies, 26% (130/490) for HCV RNA, 17% (80/482) for cured HBV, 1.2% (6/483) for active HBV, 2.7% (13/482) for HIV and 2.1% (10/473) for previous Syphilis. Presence of Anti-HBs indicating HBV vaccination was 24% (115/475). Previously HCV tested were 95% (453/475). Eighty-eight percent (268/304) of participants with HCV antibodies knew about a previous/current HCV infection and 57% (164/288) reported previous/current treatment.

Conclusion:

To decrease the heavy burden of viral hepatitis and HIV among highly vulnerable PWID in Germany, barriers to HCV treatment, HBV vaccination, and harm reduction need to be resolved. Future monitoring will help to continuously guide the elimination progress among PWID in Germany.

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Disclosure of Interest Statement: See example below:

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AK has no conflict of interest to declare.

GS has no conflict of interest to declare.

RZ has no conflict of interest to declare.