

SCREENING FOR HCV IN A MIGRANT POPULATION IN THE MOBILE OUTREACH PROGRAM OF LISBON.

Authors: Pereira C¹, Barata F¹, Pereira I¹, Caldeira P¹, Faria H¹, Belo E¹

¹ Ares Do Pinhal, Lisboa, Portugal

Background: It is widely established that a main risk factor for transmission of infectious diseases such as hepatitis C virus (HCV) is sharing material for drug use. That makes people who use injected drugs (PWID) highly vulnerable to get infected and to disseminate it. In recent years, there was a relevant inflow of PWID migrant individuals in the mobile outreach program (MOP) in Lisbon. In order to achieve WHO elimination goals, the first step is to understand HCV prevalence in this population by conducting a new approach that centralizes screening and RNA testing procedures.

Method: The sample comprised 71 migrants. After signing the informed consent, they were interviewed for data collection on sociodemographic variables. These participants were then screened with in-vitro diagnostic rapid tests for HCV. Confirmation of RNA was done to reactive cases through Cepheid GeneXpert HCV viral load.

Results: The data show that most participants are men, single and an average age of 34 years old. Most of these individuals are from India (35%) and Nepal (35%) and they are in Portugal for more than 12 months. About half of these individuals have started drug consumption in their country of origin, drink alcohol and most report not sharing drug use materials. For reactive cases of HCV (23), 15 patients did RNA testing that revealed 9 RNA positive cases for HCV, 4 negative and 2 errors.

Conclusions: These results indicate the importance of screening HCV in migrant population as soon as they start the program in order to identify the serological status which was unknown till then. The percentage of HCV reactive cases (32%) in this sample is lower in comparison to the general population in MOP (65%) in 2019. This shows the relevance of screening and linking to care migrants as an important measure to contribute to the elimination of this infection.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nothing to declare.