

SCREENING HEPATITIS C IN HARM REDUCTION CENTERS IN FRANCE, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER COVID, WHAT'S THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS?

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Background:

In France, it has been estimated that at least 90 000 people are unaware of their HCV infection. Many reports indicated declines in hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing during covid crisis. But, what are the consequences for new contaminations in France? The aim is to compile and analyze the results of 5 roadtrips between March 2020 until the end of 2021 to compare results before Covid, during crisis and one year after is a way to see if they're different.

Methods:

A team made up of caregivers and peers has been carrying out roadtrips for several years to screen people who use drugs (PWUDs) for hepatitis C. Around the same number of people seen, drug users, same addiction centers, the results are absolutely comparable.

Results:

First roadtrip : done during the pre-COVID-19 period (October 2019), 108 HCV antibodies done, 12 RNA + tests with POC, prevalence 11%.

Second roadtrip: October 2020, after first confinement, 112 HCV antibodies, 10 RNA + tests, prevalence 9%.

Third and forth roadtrip: April and October 2021, after a year and half crisis, results are : 97 and 92 HCV antibodies tests respectively and 3 RNA tests + for each, prevalence 3% and 3,26% respectively.

Fifth roadtrip: after Covid, 75 antibodies VHC antibodies tests, 8 RNA+, prevalence 10,7%.

Conclusion:

Before Covid, during the preliminary interviews, very few drug users said they share injection equipment. They were much more at the last roadtrip, after crisis. Behaviors have changed? Harm reduction centers were more closed during Covid-19? Difficulties to move with the confinements? Hard to say, but results speak for themselves. Achieve elimination hepatitis C by 2030 is not certain when if an event like Covid-19 seems to reactivate the epidemic. the years to come will show if behaviors return to the way they were before covid.

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The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.