

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN A COHORT OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS BEFORE AND FOLLOWING DIRECT-ACTING ANTIVIRAL TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS C: DATA FROM THE TREATMENT AND PREVENTION STUDY

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**Introduction:** Direct-acting antiviral medications for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection halts progression of HCV-related liver disease.(1) Yet alcohol consumption remains unexplored in the context of HCV care among people who inject drugs (PWID) despite its role in alcohol liver disease progression.(2,3) Alcohol consumption patterns before and following HCV treatment were compared in a cohort of PWID from the Treatment and Prevention (TAP) study.

**Method:** The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C) questionnaire was administered throughout the TAP study; a community-based HCV treatment trial using a nurse-led model.(4,5) An AUDIT-C score of  $\geq 3$  (women) and  $\geq 4$  (men) were categorized as hazardous drinkers. Non-hazardous drinkers included those with a lower score and non-drinkers. A McNemar's test was used to compare AUDIT-C categories between baseline and week 24 follow-up (sustained virologic response).

**Results:** Among 108 participants (mean age, SD= 39.89  $\pm$  7.85; male= 71.30%) who completed an AUDIT-C questionnaire at both time-points, there was no significant change in hazardous drinking (38.8%/38.8% p=1). The majority, 84 (77.8%), remained in the same category following treatment (n=30 hazardous drinker, n=54 non-hazardous drinker). However, an equal proportion of participants (n=12) became either a hazardous or non-hazardous drinker following treatment.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** A significant proportion of participants consume alcohol at a hazardous rate following treatment. Whilst HCV clearance improves liver health(6), the risk of alcohol-related liver disease persists among hazardous drinkers(3,7), which may be addressed with concurrent alcohol-based interventions. Importantly, a qualitative investigation would explore the role of alcohol in the lives of PWID treated for HCV.

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