

HEPATITIS C AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN PRISON: PREVALENCE AND INTERVENTIONS IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

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Background:

People in prison report high HCV rates, often acquired through drug injection. Prisons are important settings for reducing the burden of HCV and for the micro elimination of hepatitis C. Equality and continuity of care are key principles in the provision of hepatitis C treatment for prison population which is in regular contact with the community.

Methods:

Review of European data from: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and European Funded project “Joint action on HIV and co-infection prevention and harm reduction” (HA-REACT) on: prevalence of HCV among people in prison and availability of prison interventions.

Results:

Based on data from 20 EU countries (2010-2017) the prevalence of HCV among people in prison ranges from < 1 % to 43 % and it is up to 97 % among people with drug injection history. There is an increased risk of HCV acquisition in the first period after prison release. Harm reduction interventions targeting infectious diseases are available in prison, including prevention and treatment, needles and syringes programmes (3 countries), condom distribution (20) and safe tattooing programmes (10).

Interventions targeting HCV are implemented in most European prisons. HCV testing is voluntary and testing rates ranged between 5 % and 100 %, with full coverage reported in three countries. Antiviral treatment for HCV is available in most countries, but coverage is full in five countries. Little is known of people’s opportunity to continue HCV treatment after prison; referral to HCV treatment is fully or partially available in 25 countries.

Conclusion:

Prevalence of HCV among people in European prisons with drug injection history is high and interventions are available in most countries, although their provision remains low when compared to the community. Addressing HCV in prison may benefit not only the prison population but the community at large.

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