THE HEPATITIS BUS - A NORWEGIAN DRUG USER INITIATIVE

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Background: In Norway, 10 000 people live with HCV infection, of whom the majority are infected via use of syringes. Approximately 4000 are on OST. For many, contact with the ordinary health care system may be challenging. The aim of this project was to develop a mobile hepatitis bus for people who use drugs.

Description of model of care/intervention: The user organization proLAR Nett is operated and owned by users who have lived experience with OST treatment. The organization was founded in 2007 and has since then worked at individual- and system-level. In 2013 HCV became a flagship case and we have developed and distributed user-friendly brochures, given HCV lectures "From user to user" and developed a website (hepc.no). The present project will be ongoing in 2018 and 2019 and aims to contribute to increased knowledge among users about HCV, offer rapid tests for anti-HCV and FibroScan. The bus is staffed with a driver from the user organization and a nurse, and visits low-threshold institutions and manned housing across the country.

Effectiveness: The production targets are to perform 12 trips of one-week duration each year and to test 750 persons for anti-HCV. During 4 trips we have met 240 people, and performed 78 anti-HCV tests and FibroScans. The experience so far is that the users lack knowledge about HCV and that many are unaware of their infection status. The surprises were therefore great for some and those who learned that they were not infected were also pleased to know their status. Most institutions follow-up very well and perform blood tests within 4-6 weeks after arrival at the institution.

Conclusion and next steps: The mobile hepatitis bus is an effective method for reaching users with information about HCV and linkage to care. User-led projects will be crucial in the fight for elimination of HCV in Norway.

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