

UPTAKE OF HEPATITIS C DIRECT-ACTING ANTIVIRAL TREATMENT AMONG INDIVIDUALS WITH HIV CO-INFECTION IN AUSTRALIA.

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Background: Unrestricted access to direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection has been available in Australia since March 2016. This study assessed DAA treatment uptake among individuals with HIV-HCV co-infection, during the first year of access to DAA treatment in Australia.

Methods: All prescriptions in Australia are submitted to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) by dispensing pharmacies. The 100% PBS data on dispensed DAA and antiretroviral therapy (ART) prescriptions from March 2016 to March 2017 were used for analysis.

Results: During March 2016 to March 2017, a total of 935 individuals with HIV-HCV co-infection were receiving ART and initiated DAA treatment, with 93% to 97% completing their prescribed treatment course. Estimated DAA uptake in HIV-HCV infected population was 42% (uncertainty range: 40-44%). The majority were men (94%), with a median age of 50 years. DAA prescriptions were 64% by specialists, 25% by general practitioners (GP) and 11% by other prescribers. From March-April 2016 to January-March 2017, the proportion of individuals ≤50 years old increased from 49% to 57% (P for trend=0.058) and the proportion of individuals initiated on DAA by GPs increased from 20% to 26% (P for trend =0.031). Most specialists (77%) and GPs (72%) initiated DAA treatment for 1-3 patients. Most individuals initiated on DAA by GPs or sexual health specialists received their ART from the same prescriber (68% and 77%, respectively). Most individuals initiated on DAA by infectious disease physicians (73%) or gastroenterologists (97%) received their ART from a different prescriber.

Conclusion: High level of DAA treatment uptake and completion was observed among individuals with HIV-HCV co-infection during the first year of DAA access in Australia. The proportion of individuals prescribed DAA by GPs increased over time, important for broadened access. Ongoing monitoring of treatment uptake and completion is essential.

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