

RISK PERCEPTION ABOUT HEPATITIS C IN PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES USERS

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Background:

The prevalence of HIV and hepatitis due to viral infection is very high in drug addicts, particularly in people who inject drugs, weakening their immune systems. Injecting drug users are a well-identified high-risk group. In Portugal, the prevalence of anti-HCV currently reaches 53%, with 85% in injecting users.

It is therefore vitally important to treat as many infected people as possible and prevent new infections, at the same time it is an excellent opportunity to bring these people to health services.

Methods:

This study intends to evaluate the risk perception of HCV infection in drug addicts. This work is carried out in three steps: collection of information on structured clinical history, application of a questionnaire about beliefs and knowledge of hepatitis C and blood collection for anti-HCV test, in five treatment units for addictions in central Portugal, referring all patients with a positive HCV test to hospital consultation.

Results:

Until now have been studied, 119 individuals, 77.3% are male, (92). The average age is 45 years. 39.5% and 10.9% are in Methadone and Buprenorphine program respectively. 17.7% refer as main substance alcohol, 10.8% heroin and 6.7% cocaine; 57.1% consumed intravenously throughout their lives. In 43.7%, the practice of polyconsumption is verified. Of the total sample, 92 individuals (77.3%) held anti-HCV test, of which 62 (67.4%) were positive.

Regarding the questionnaire, most individuals (84%) believe it is a severe disease and 92.4% think that there is treatment but 26.1% admits there is no cure. It should be noted that almost half (49.6%) of the individuals say they need more information about hepatitis C disease.

Conclusion:

This study is part of a set of partnership actions between UDC and CHUC, and intends to evaluate the perception of the risk of HCV infection in psychoactive substances users. We intend to continue the study with the inclusion of more patients from the treatment units for addictions.

These results are only indicators of the ongoing study. The limitations of the study are the result of restrictive measures resulting from the pandemic and the limited access to health facilities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors recognize the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We declare there is no conflict of interest to report.