

HCV SEROPREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS IN A COHORT OF PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS SCREENED WITH RAPID TESTS IN ROME: THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC.

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Background:

It's important to investigate among hard-to-reach drug users to better estimate real HCV prevalence and to improve treatment and health services access. Villa Maraini Foundation in partnership with the Infectious Diseases Clinic of Tor Vergata University built a care cascade for this key population.

Methods:

Drug users belonging to the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Ambulatory and Needle Sharing Program Street Unit of Villa Maraini were tested using OraQuick HCV rapid test from July 2015 to November 2017. Users made a questionnaire to assess sex and drug-related risk behaviours. In case of positive tests, subjects received support and were taken in charge by the Infectious Diseases Clinic. Chi-square test, univariate and multivariate logistic regression were used for statistical analysis to examine factors associated with HCV serostatus.

Results:

n. 673 people who use drugs enrolled by Villa Maraini performed HCV rapid test. The overall seroprevalence of HCV antibody was 31.5% - 212/673 - 74.5% male, median age 37 (IQR 30-45). Backward multivariate logistic regression analysis revealed that factors associated with HCV antibody positivity included age>35 (OR, 3.95 [1.78-5.8]; p<0.0001), a previous HCV test (OR, 3.44 [1.78-5.8]; p<0.0001), injection route (OR, 2.69 [1.61-4.48]; p<0.0001), and sex with PWID (OR, 2.69 [1.61-4.48]; p<0.0001), having a job results as a protective factor (OR, 0.36 [0.22-0.61]; p<0.0001). Subjects with HCV positive serostatus most frequently declared to share drug paraphernalia more than a year before.

Conclusions:

HCV seroprevalence in our cohort of people who use drugs is still high. Risk factors associated to HCV positivity are intrinsic to the drug users status (the injection route), even if it emerges that sharing drug paraphernalia would be of long standing (thanks to the NSP) and sex related if the partner is a PWID. These findings stress the need to focus on drug users in order to reach HCV eradication.

Villa Maraini Foundation received funding from Gilead Community Award for this project.