

## RECENT ABSTINENCE AT THE MOMENT TO INITIATE HCV TREATMENT IS NO GUARANTEE TO AVOID HCV REINFECTIONS

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**Introduction:** The perception by many providers is that "people who injected drugs (PWID) actively will simply get re-infected after HCV treatment". As such, HCV treatment of PWID in active consumption is often not considered worthwhile, and they are not offered these treatments.

**Methods:** This study was based on data from a follow-up cohort of HCV-infected people who consumed heroin and/or cocaine (smoked or injected) during the previous 6 months and received DAA at 2 low threshold harm reduction mobile unit (LTMHRUs) located in Madrid (Spain). Participants received HCV treatment while in active consumption or recent abstinence. Cox proportional hazard regression analysis was used.

**Results:** 165 individuals-initiated DAA at the 2 LTMHRUs. Notably, 120 patients (72.7%) were homeless and 71 (43%) started therapy in recent abstinence. Of those who started therapy in recent abstinence, 39 (55%) relapsed in drugs during follow-up. Total time at risk for reinfection was 101.1-PY (median, 0.6 years; IQR, 0.3-1.3). We identified 10 reinfections. Five participants reported use of injected drugs (IDU) at initiation of HCV treatment, and another 5 initiated HCV treatment during recent abstinence. Median estimated time to HCV reinfection was 7.2 (IQR, 4.2-18) months after the end of treatment. Median time to reinfection was shorter in those who reported IDU at initiation of HCV treatment (5.9 months; IQR, 4.3-7.8). The incidence of reinfection was not statistically different according to IDU at baseline (recent abstinence at baseline 9.1 [95% CI, 2.9; 21.3] per 100 PY compared with active consumption at baseline 10.8 [95% CI, 3.5; 25.2] per 100 PY, p 0.79).

**Conclusions:** Our study shows that, owing to the chronic nature and high frequency of relapses to drug addiction, the incidence of reinfection is similar between PWID who initiate HCV treatment in recent abstinence or active consumption. Also, these findings highlight the need to frequent testing following successful treatment to detect early reinfections.

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