

**A NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS SUCCESSFULLY PRODUCED A STATE WIDE AUTHENTICATED HCV PREVALENCE DATA AMONG PWIDS AND THEIR SPOUSES. PERHAPS, STILL THE ONLY STATE DATA EVER PRODUCED.**

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**Background:** Even though, Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a critical health issue and concern among people who inject drugs (PWIDs) in the state of Manipur, the true extent of the epidemic is difficult to gauge because surveillance systems for hepatitis C are not in place which makes difficult to estimate the no of HCV infection among different populations. With an aim to produce a state authenticated HCV prevalence data among PWIDs & their spouses, CoNE successfully conducted a serological study though adopting a Public Private Partnership model.

**Methods:** CoNE conducted awareness & screening camp after obtaining an ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Board (REB), Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Government of India with an objective to produce a state authenticated baseline HCV prevalence data among PWIDs & their spouses. Whole blood samples were collected for HCV antibody testing along with study of awareness level by using pre - and post questionnaire in nine districts of Manipur. The study was conducted from July 10 to December 29, 2018.

**Results:** 70 awareness & screening camps were conducted covering all the nine districts of the state. A total of 2597 people have been reached out through the awareness camps and 2219 people were screened for HCV antibody out of which 956 (43.1%) were found reactive. Among them, 97.6 % are male and 2.4% are female. Of the total people screened, 72% of them are aware of their HIV status. 6.7% of the participants, who had undergone HIV testing, were found co-infected with HCV. PWIDs were 7 times more likely to have HCV infection than their spouses.

**Conclusion:** Findings will be used to support country and state level advocacy and planning for implementation of policies and initiatives to scale up access to HCV testing & treatment for key populations towards elimination.

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