

Hepatitis C treatment wanted yet not received: barriers to receiving HCV treatment among people who inject drugs

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Background

- Chronic hepatitis C infection (HCV) is highly prevalent in people who inject drugs (PWID).
- Injection drug use is the primary risk factor for HCV transmission.
- PWID face barriers to accessing treatment for HCV.
- While there are multiple barriers, some of these stem from experiences with the healthcare system.
- We aimed to describe past experiences with HCV care and beliefs about HCV treatment among PWID enrolled in a clinical trial.

Research Methods

Design, population, and interventions:

- Baseline interviews of the first 44 participants enrolled in a randomized controlled trial of HCV treatment
- We included adults with positive HCV RNA at time of entry who report current or recent use of injection drugs
- We excluded persons currently in care for HCV (defined as 2 visits with HCV treatment provider in the past 6 months)
- Randomized to receive medical evaluation and HCV treatment on-site at a syringe services program (intervention) vs referral to local HCV care providers

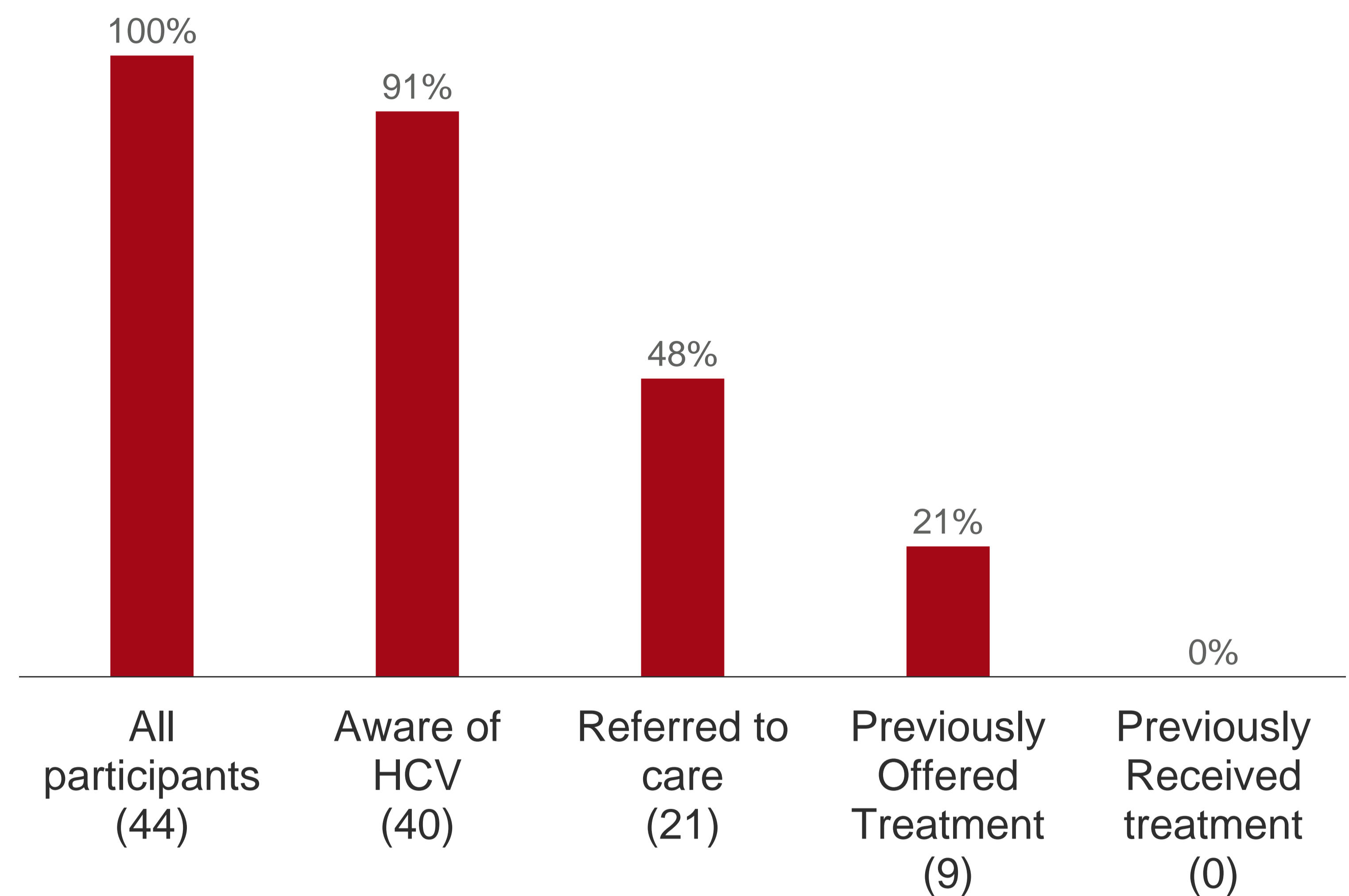
Interview methods:

- Participants completed baseline structured interviews focused on past healthcare experiences, specifically related to HCV treatment and drug use treatment.
- Participants were asked about prior knowledge about HCV, motivation to seek treatment, engagement with medical care, and prior offers of HCV treatment.
- Interviews were conducted using a computer assisted survey instrument and facilitated by a member of the research team.

Participant Characteristics

	All participants (n=44)
Median age in years (range)	40 (22-63)
Gender	
Female	12 (27%)
Male	32 (73%)
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic or Latino/a	21 (48%)
Non-Hispanic White	17 (39%)
Non-Hispanic Black	3 (7%)
Non-Hispanic Other or multiple-race	3 (7%)
Homeless (past 3 mo)	33 (75%)
Past year income	
<\$10,000	31 (71%)
\$11,000 - \$25,000	7 (16%)
>\$25,000	6 (13%)
Health insurance	
Public (Medicaid)	38 (86%)
Other	4 (9%)
None	2 (5%)
Injected drugs (past 1 mo)	36 (82%)

HCV Treatment Cascade at Study Entry

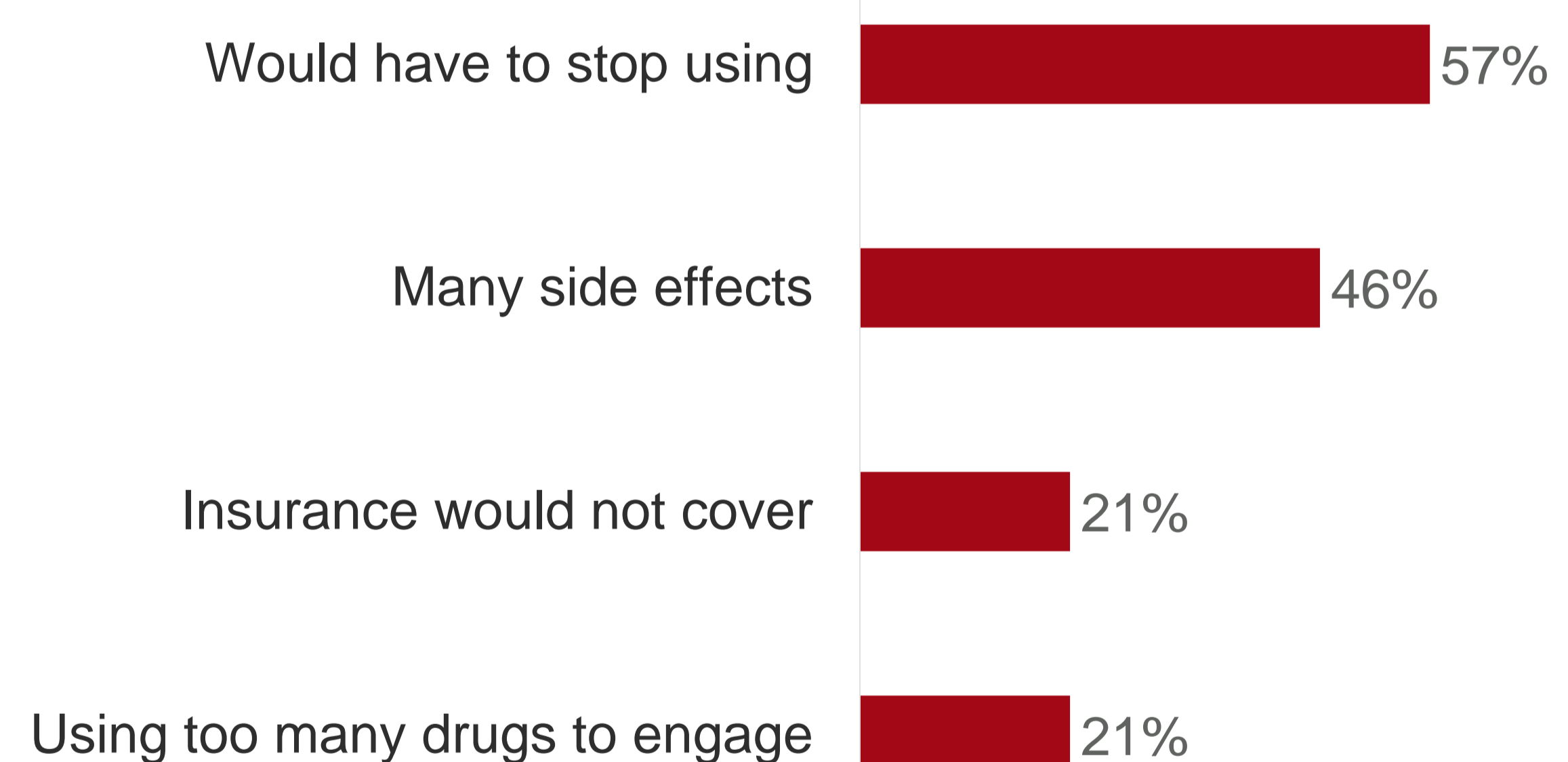


Motivations and Barriers for HCV Treatment at Study Entry

Motivations



Barriers



Conclusions

- Among PWID enrolled at a syringe services program who were not currently in HCV-care, most were aware of their HCV status, but few had ever been referred to care or offered treatment.
- Ongoing drug use and insurance were among participants' perceived barriers to being offered treatment.
- Misconceptions about HCV treatment were common, highlighting the need for education and communication.

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