

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

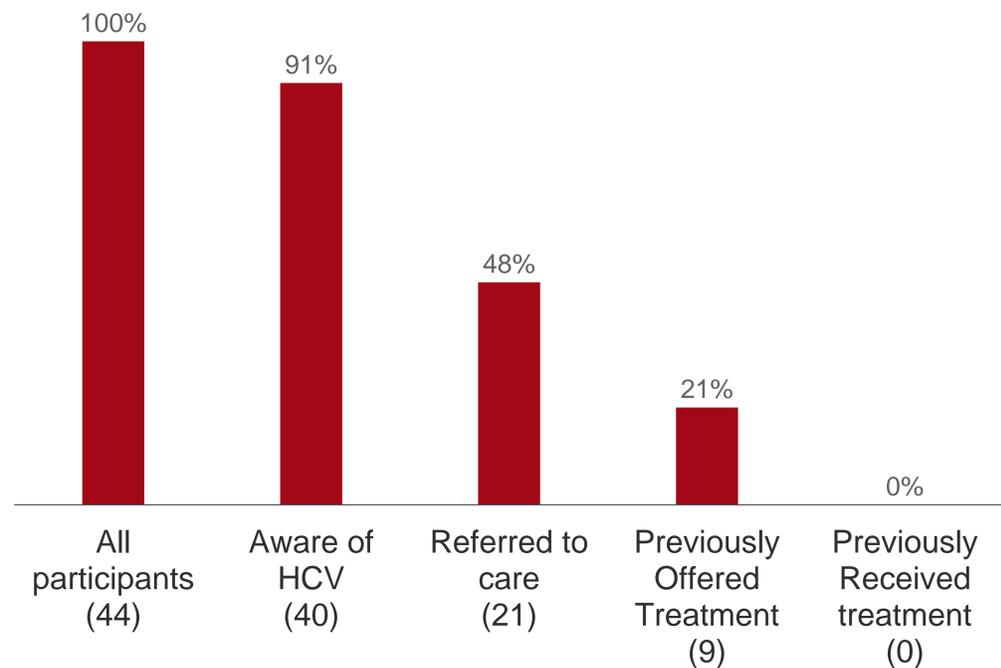
Interview methods:

- 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

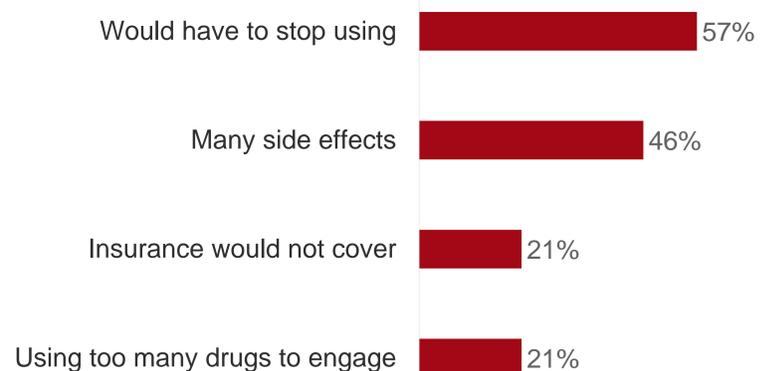


Motivations and Barriers for HCV Treatment at Study Entry

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.

Acknowledgments and Funding

- We acknowledge study participants and the Lower East Side Harm Reduction Center (study site)
- Funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (R01DA041298, P30DA04050) and National Institute of Mental Health (T32MH073553).
- Drs Kapadia and Eckhardt have received research grants to their institution from Gilead Sciences Inc. Dr Marks has received grants to her institution from Gilead Sciences Inc, Merck, and Bristol-Meyers Squibb. These grants are unrelated to the current study.