

PEER-LED APPROACH TO HEPATITIS-C TREATMENT IN KACHIN STATE, MYANMAR

Aung M¹, Boulet R¹, Myint S¹

¹ Médecins du Monde (France) – Myanmar Mission

Background:

In Myanmar, according to national seroprevalence survey conducted in 2015, almost 1.3 million people live with viral hepatitis C. Prevalence is especially high among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), with an estimated 84.5% HCV+ (anti-body) in Kachin State. According to National Program, 20% of HCV+ patients are coinfecting with HIV.

In 2019, Médecins du Monde's harm reduction program in Myanmar started implementing a component on Hepatitis C treatment among PWIDs, in collaboration with Médecins Sans Frontières.

Rationale and Objective:

MdM works with a big network of peer workers (community worker - CW) in the delivery of harm reduction services. The CWs, totaling 120 for the whole of Kachin (divided into 3 project sites: Myitkyina, Moegaung and Hopin), are embedded not only with the general community but among and with PWIDs and have direct link with the key population in the areas they are working in.

Peer-led approach to Hepatitis C treatment in Kachin focuses on the CWs in delivering key messages, raising awareness and providing information about opt-out screening, point-of care testing, as well as link to prevention, medical and other harm reduction services.

This commentary intends to highlight the role and importance of peer supported HCV treatment model which contributes to the synchronization of HCV treatment with other harm reduction services in Myanmar.

Discussion:

The constant peer involvement in HCV diagnosis and treatment program, with the intent to deliver targeted education and peer support throughout the patients' cascade of care, complements MdM's comprehensive support to the clients, easing incorporation of an HCV component into existing HIV and harm reduction model of care.

It allows deeper engagement with the community workers as well as members of the local community to identify constraints/barriers to care and to contribute to better coverage for diagnosis and treatment, increased retention and greater acceptance.

Disclosure of Interest:

The Hepatitis C Treatment Program in Kachin was implemented through an operational partnership between Medecins du Monde (MdM), Medecins San Frontiers – Swiss (MSF-CH), and Save the Children, principal recipient of the Global Fund.