

# FROM HCV DIAGNOSIS TO TREATMENT INITIATION IN DRUG USERS: RESULTS FROM A MOBILE OUTREACH PROGRAM IN LISBON

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## Introduction

- Infectious diseases are a leading cause of death and disability in some vulnerable populations, such as drug users and the homeless;
- Harm reduction programs undertake a significant effort to screen, diagnose and treat these burdensome conditions;
- Infectious diseases were always a priority in the Mobile Outreach Program (MOP) managed by Ares do Pinhal in Lisbon (Portugal) since the beginning of the millennium;
- The present poster reports on the results of the screening for infectious diseases in the MOP from 2015 to 2020, based on an observational design.

## Methods

- This is an observational, retrospective study based solely on the information reported in the medical charts;
- All the users provided written signed informed consent forms, authorizing access to epidemiological data and substance use records;
- Screening for ID is a part of the routine practice at the MOP.

## Results



From June 2015-October 2017 we referred patients to hepatology appointments on their own



From October 2017-March 2019 our team took the patients directly to the hospital by car to attend clinical appointments and exams;



From February 2020 onwards, the hepatologist goes to the mobile unit, and the patient is not required to go to the hospital. In all these approaches, if treatment is prescribed, the medication is taken while doing methadone daily at the MOP.

307 RNA positive results

70 patients concluded HCV treatment

Diagnosis to treatment initiation → 41 months (avg)

## Conclusions

- Time from diagnosis to Treatment initiation remains very high;
- However, more than clinical uncertainty, drop-outs, failure to follow on referral to clinical appointments, and the COVID pandemic all contributed decisively to the increase in time to treatment initiation;
- Further efforts must be pursued to ensure that in the coming years, this issue is addressed;
- Early diagnosis and subsequent treatment initiation is a factor for good clinical prognosis.

### Disclosure of Interest Statement

The authors report no conflict of interest related to the work depicted here.

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