



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# Factors associated with undiagnosed hepatitis C infection among people who inject drugs: missed opportunities for diagnostic testing in the United Kingdom (UK).

VD Hope<sup>1,2</sup>, KJ Cullen<sup>1</sup>, JV Parry<sup>1,2</sup>, F Ncube<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> National Infection Service, Public Health England, London, UK

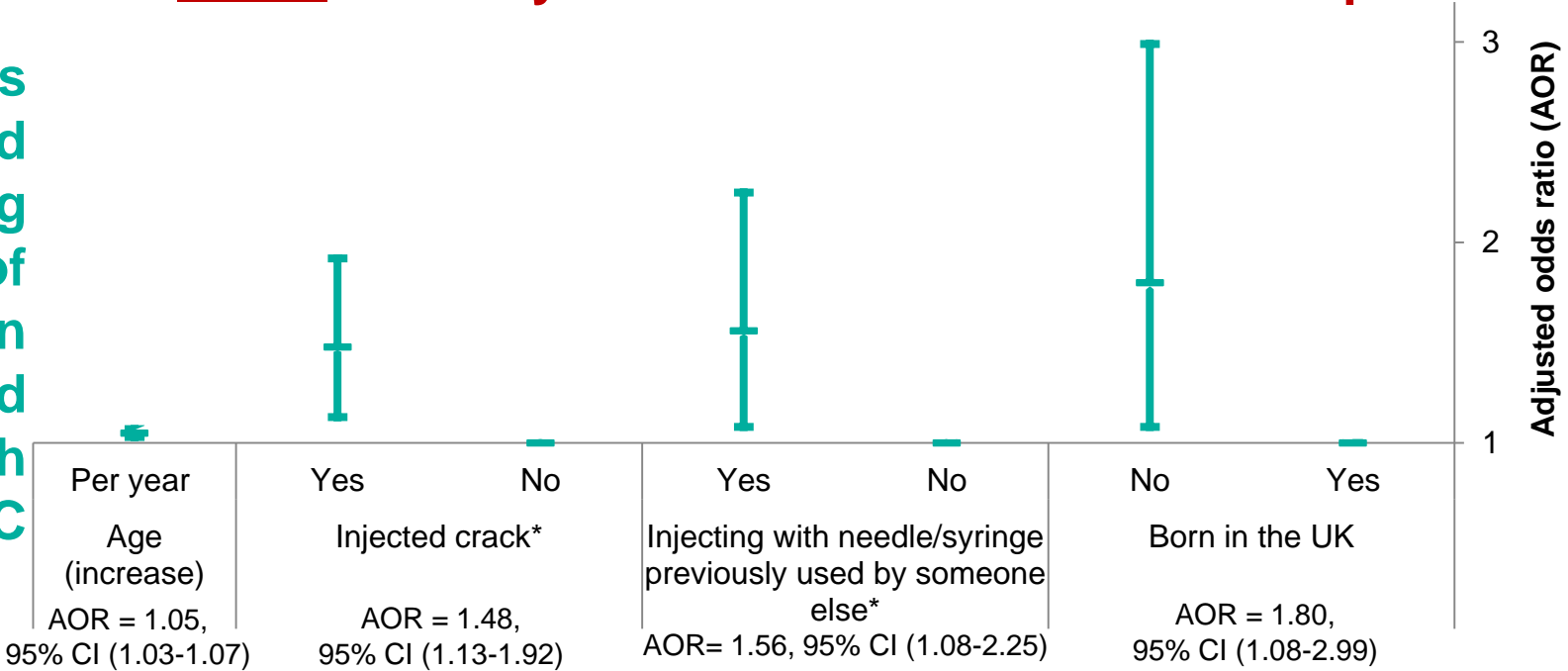
<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Public Health and Policy, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK

# Background, Aims & Method

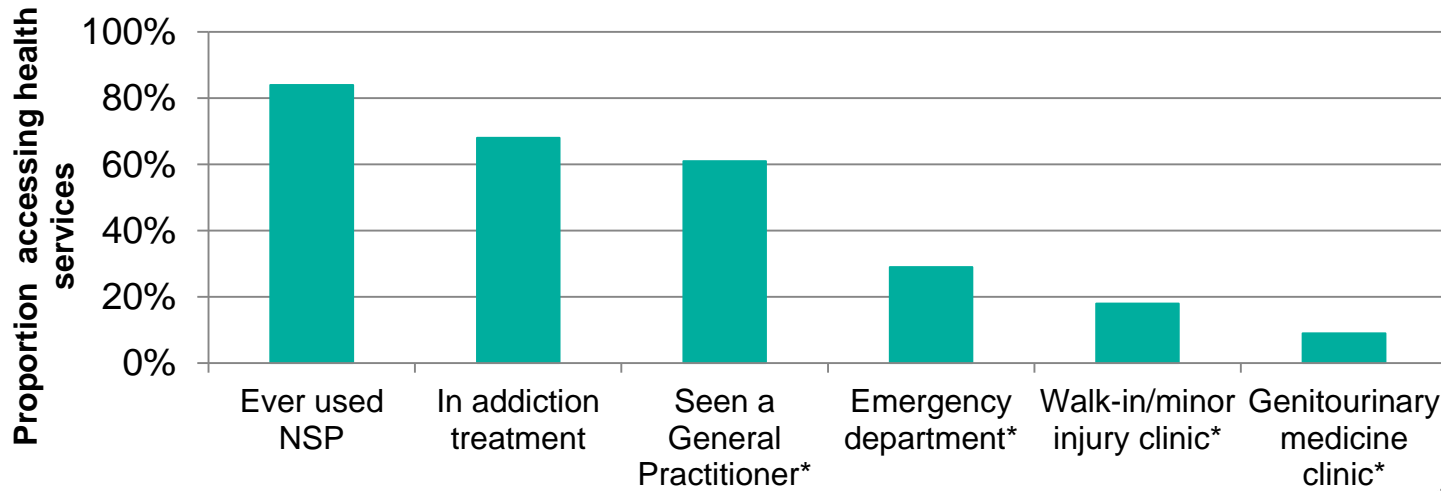
- People who inject drugs (PWID) typically have a high prevalence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection.
- The development of very effective antivirals means that diagnosis of HCV is increasingly important to reducing illness and death.
- An annual voluntary **unlinked-anonymous** survey obtains dried-blood spot samples and questionnaires from PWID accessing services across the United Kingdom (except Scotland).
- Data from those **participants** in 2013 who **were anti-HCV positive** and who **had injected during the preceding year** was used. (N=934; mean age 37 years; 26% were women; 7% had been born outside of the UK; 91% had injected heroin, 53% crack, & 29% amphetamine).
- Using self-reported data on diagnosis, **those who were 'unaware' of having been infected with hepatitis C were compared to those who were 'aware'**.
- **Health service use among those with *unaware*** was also examined.

**Overall, 48% were aware that they had ever been infected with hepatitis C**

**Factors associated with being aware of having been infected with hepatitis C**



**Among the those unaware, 22% had never had a diagnostic test.**



**Current and recent service uptake among those unaware of having been infected with hepatitis C**

\* During the preceding 12 months

# Conclusions

Overall, half (52%) were *unaware* that they had been infected with hepatitis C.

Our findings indicate:-

- **Those groups of PWID where the uptake of hepatitis C testing needs to be improved most, i.e.**
  - ✓ **younger PWID, those born in the UK, those not injecting crack or not sharing injecting equipment as they were less likely to have their hepatitis C infection diagnosed.**
- **The settings where the offer and/or the acceptance of hepatitis C testing needs to be improved, i.e.**
  - ✓ **specialist services for PWID and primary care, as those who were unaware of having been infected with hepatitis C made extensive use of these types of service.**

# Thank you for your attention

## **Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to all of the people who took part in the survey and to the various services that assisted with their recruitment. In addition, we would like to thank those who provided administrative support for the survey and those who undertook the laboratory work.

This work was core funded by Public Health England.

There are no conflicts of interest.