

IT'S YOUR LIVER: A PEER EDUCATION PROJECT

Stornes, A¹

¹PorLAR, Norway

Background: In Norway approximately 7 500 people are in opioid substitution therapy (OST), and 52% of persons in OST are tested positive for Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)-antibodies (2014). proLAR is an organization of and for people in OST. The project "It's YOUR liver" was initiated because many people in OST experienced that it was hard to access relevant information on Hepatitis C from their GP, health care personnel at OST-clinics and other health professionals.

Method: In order to reach our target group the project utilizes peer education methodology where volunteers in our organization who themselves are on OST provide correct, targeted and understandable information on Hepatitis C to their peers. They also offer HCV antibody rapid test to encourage their peers to seek appropriate care for their Hepatitis C infection. The project was piloted in OST-clinics and rehabilitation centres in Norway 2015.

Results: The peer educators' experience from the pilot workshops is that the knowledge gap on Hepatitis C is wide, and many people on OST are upset that they haven't received any information regarding the disease through the OST-clinic. A need for more information on Hepatitis C for personnel in OST-clinics was identified and proLAR has as a result of this been invited to several OST-clinics to have workshops for staff as well as patients.

Of the persons in OST who attended the "It's YOUR liver"-workshops in 2015, 90% had little or no knowledge about Hepatitis C prior to the course. Furthermore, 99% of those who have attended the workshops indicated that they will share this knowledge with their peers who are living with Hepatitis C or are at risk for infection due to ongoing injecting drug use.

Of the persons in OST who attended the workshops in 2015, several chose to take an antibody test to check if she/he had been exposed for HCV.