

MONITORING HCV AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN EUROPE: A SET OF INDICATORS TO SERVE POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Background: HCV infection is highly prevalent among people who inject drugs (PWID) across Europe. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) routinely monitors prevalence, prevention and treatment response to HCV infection among PWID in Europe through an integrated set of epidemiological and intervention-related indicators. This paper presents the current situation in Europe and highlights the potential and need for further development of the monitoring framework to inform policies to tackle HCV among PWID.

Methods: The EMCDDA collates information from the 28 European Members States, Norway and Turkey through REITOX National focal points. Data include prevalence of injecting drug use (IDU) and of infections, including HCV among PWID and provision and coverage of health services, including opioid substitution treatment (OST) and needle and syringe programmes (NSP).

Results: Latest estimates of IDU prevalence, available for 16 countries, range from less than 1 to more than 9 cases per 1000 adults. HCV antibody prevalence among PWID in 2013-14 varies from 15% to 84%, exceeding 50% in 6 out of 13 countries with national data; HCV trends increased in 6 of them in 2008-14. Low syringes provision (<100/IDU/year) and low percentage of high-risk opioid users receiving OST (<30%) was reported in 6 out of 14 and 6 out of 20 countries respectively.

Conclusion: The burden of HCV in Europe is high. Intervention coverage in some countries is low. Large variation in HCV epidemiology and prevention responses across countries is present. Current data suggest ongoing transmission. Wider implementation of available indicators, better use of existing monitoring systems and development of new indicators to monitor the cascade of care are all needed. The EMCDDA and its National Focal Points collaborate to enhance the HCV responses and chart progress towards preventing and treating HCV among PWID in Europe.

Disclosure of Interest Statement None declared