

The central role of prisons in elimination of hepatitis C in southern Sweden

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Background:

Skåne Region appointed in 2022 a multidisciplinary Hepatitis team for implementation of the Swedish national hepatitis C (HCV) elimination plan, where prison health care is represented. Key areas have been coordination, education and improving access to diagnostics and care. Guidelines for testing are present at all five prisons in Skåne Region. Uptake to treatment and testing had not previously been evaluated.

Methods:

An analysis of all new reported HCV cases 2021-2025 in Skåne Region was conducted, focusing on the number of HCV cases identified via prison health care at the five prisons in the region. In 2025, an information campaign aimed at incarcerated individuals and staff to increase uptake to testing for HIV, hepatitis B (HBV) and HCV was launched.

Results:

The number of reported cases in Skåne Region had declined with 42% from 145 cases in 2021 to 84 in 2025. Approximately 25% of the reported cases in 2025 were incident infections (the majority detected at needle syringe programs). Newly detected chronic infections constituted 35% of the cases and newly detected infections of unknown duration 40%. No incident infections were detected in prisons. The number of newly incarcerated individuals increased by 12% from 2023 to 2025. The percentage diagnosed by prison health care increased from 2,1% in 2021 to 4,8% in 2023 to 9,5% in 2025. The number of patients treated while in prison increased from 15 in 2023 to 21 in 2024 and to 32 in 2025.

Conclusion:

Prisons hold a central role in the elimination network. It is necessary to further increase the uptake to testing and treatment in prisons. Sustainable prevalence and incidence data must also be obtained in prison settings. Interventions for screening with other testing modalities than venipuncture, continuous information distribution and improved data collection are now being launched.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nothing to disclose.