

## ADHERENCE TO ADDICTION CENTERS DURING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS IS LOW, MAKING HEPATITIS C SCREENING AND TREATMENT DIFFICULT

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### Background

Controlling Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infection in individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) is key to achieving the WHO eliminating goal but screening and treatment continues to be a challenge. The objective of the study was to analyze the incidence of HCV infection in a cohort of subjects with SUD who had previously been screened and the degree of adherence to addiction centers, especially during the COVID19 pandemic.

### Methods

Prospective study conducted in an addiction center that included subjects with SUD, who previously (2018-2019) underwent HCV screening and were offered treatment. During the COVID19 pandemic, they were offered HCV screening again to assess the incidence of new infections and reinfections.

### Results

In the first study, 401 individuals with SUD were recruited, 112 (30%) were anti-HCV positive and 42 (10%) RNA-HCV positive. SVR12 was achieved in 15 of them, the rest being lost to follow-up. Eighteen months later 242 patients (60.3%) were still attached to the center 176 (72%) agreed to be screened. 58 (33%) positive anti-HCV were detected (two previously negative) and HCV-RNA was detected in 6 (3.4%). Four were previously known and had not agreed to be treated and 2 (1.1%) were new infections. There was no reinfection.

Adherence to the addiction center was higher in older subjects ( $47 \pm 11$  vs  $44 \pm 12$ ,  $p < 0.02$ ) and in those with opiate use (70% vs 30%,  $p < 0.008$ ). Patients with cocaine use were less compliant at follow-up (45% vs 55%,  $p < 0.049$ ). Psychiatric antecedents improved adherence to follow-up (66% vs 34%,  $p < 0.003$ ).

### Conclusions

Patients with SUD despite screening and treatment maintain a high prevalence and incidence of HCV infection. Adherence to addiction centers is low, with a 40% dropout rate. There are significant demographic, clinical and in the pattern of substance use differences between adherent patients and those who abandon follow-up.

### Conflicts of interest

Cristina Marcos-Fosch - No personal or financial conflicts of interest.

Lara Grau-López - No personal or financial conflicts of interest.

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