

HOW TO GET ACCESS TO MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS TO IDENTIFY AND TREAT HCV (HEPATITIS C)

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Background: To achieve elimination of HCV, vulnerable populations comprising injecting/nasal drug users have to be treated in particular. Successful treatment of HCV was shown in OAT's (Opioid agonist therapy), even when concomitant illegal drug use is ongoing, and reinfection rates were low. Yet, to identify and treat HCV in the "open-drug-scene" (without substitution) is challenging. Here we present an innovative approach to tackle this problem.

Description of model of care/intervention: The Drogenberatung e. V. Bielefeld has an "all-in-one-place-offer", designed for all citizens of Bielefeld with drug abuse. Clients are supported on a low-threshold basis, e.g. via providing places to stay (daytime), hygiene facilities, restaurants, life advice and drug use rooms. Further, a syringe/drug utensils service program (SSP) and medical professionals for medical counselling/treatment are available. On site, the offer is complemented by a general medicine practice for substitution therapy.

Based on this "all-in-one-place-offer", an innovative approach for HCV diagnosis and treatment was implemented. We provide a "point-of-care-test" for HCV using capillary blood and PCR (Polymerase Chain reaction) (GenXpert), particularly for clients of the "open-drug-scene". We use this to talk about infectious diseases and other medical/social topics. PCR-positive-clients are then examined for Genotype and liver stage and are supported if they are not insured. Therapy initiation and supervision is done on-site and is supervised daily (e.g. controlled provision of medication).

Effectiveness: Clients are very interested in this new testing-technique without "damage" of veins and up to 200 clients will be tested. First results are expected for October 2020.

Conclusion and next steps: The "all-in-one-place-offer" with a wide and comprehensive setting including medical support is promising to identify HCV-positive drug users and treat them successfully. Notwithstanding this, appreciation of the clients is needed. In the long-term, reinfection rates will have to be monitored to judge long-term success.

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