

# Hepatitis C elimination during a global pandemic: Resilience in action

INHSU 2021



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**FACENTE  
CONSULTING**  
UNDERSTAND • IMPLEMENT • TELL YOUR STORY

# Acknowledgements

All the members of End Hep C SF, which includes almost 200 people working tirelessly to serve and support people living with HCV or at risk for HCV in San Francisco, including people who inject drugs.

My co-authors:

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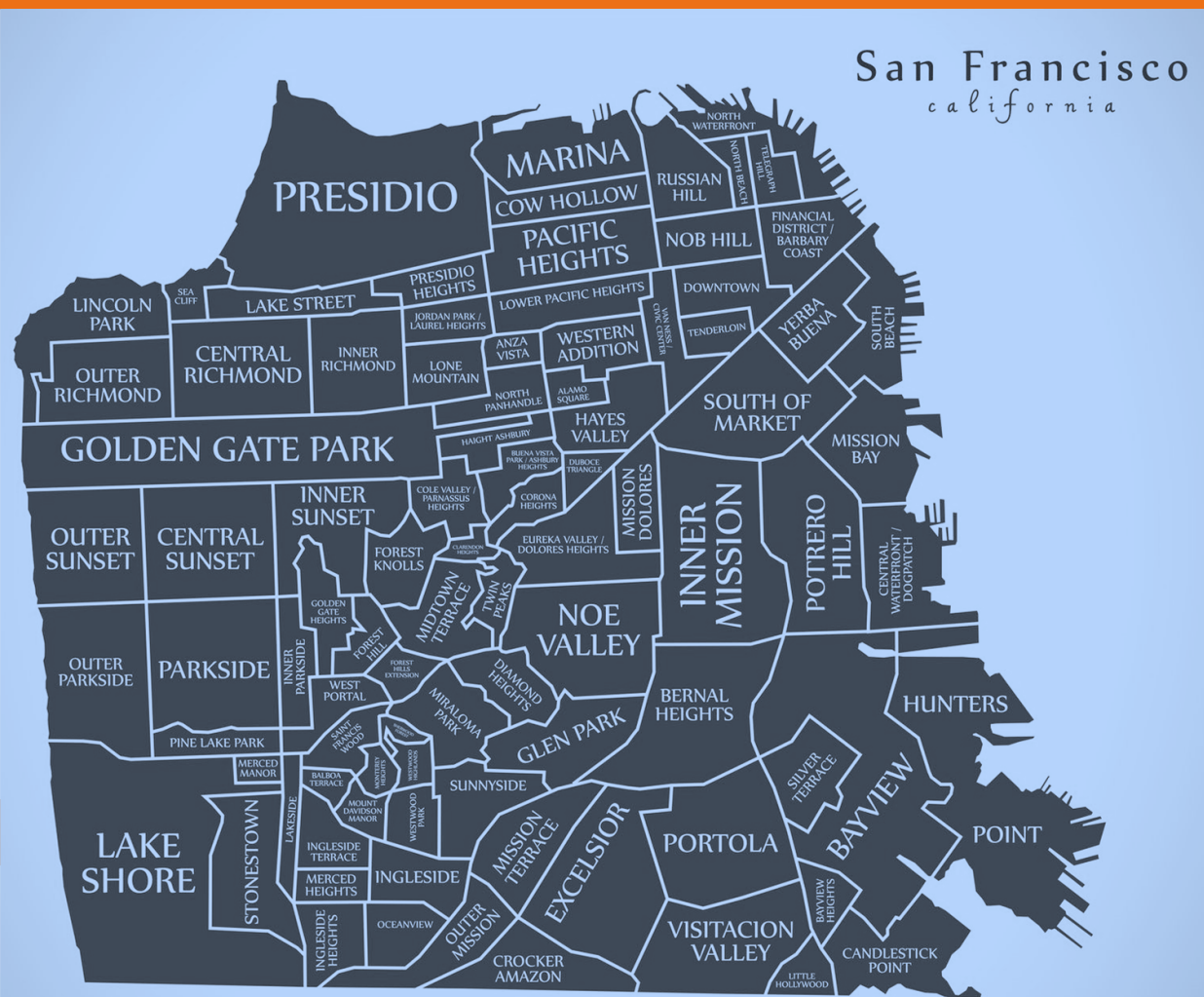
Others who played a key role:

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# Disclosure of interest

Drs. Facente and Luetkemeyer have received funding from Gilead Pharmaceuticals. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study.

# Background



- More than 12,000 people are living with hepatitis C virus (HCV) in San Francisco, California as of 2015
- As estimated 68% of people living with HCV were people who inject drugs (PWID)

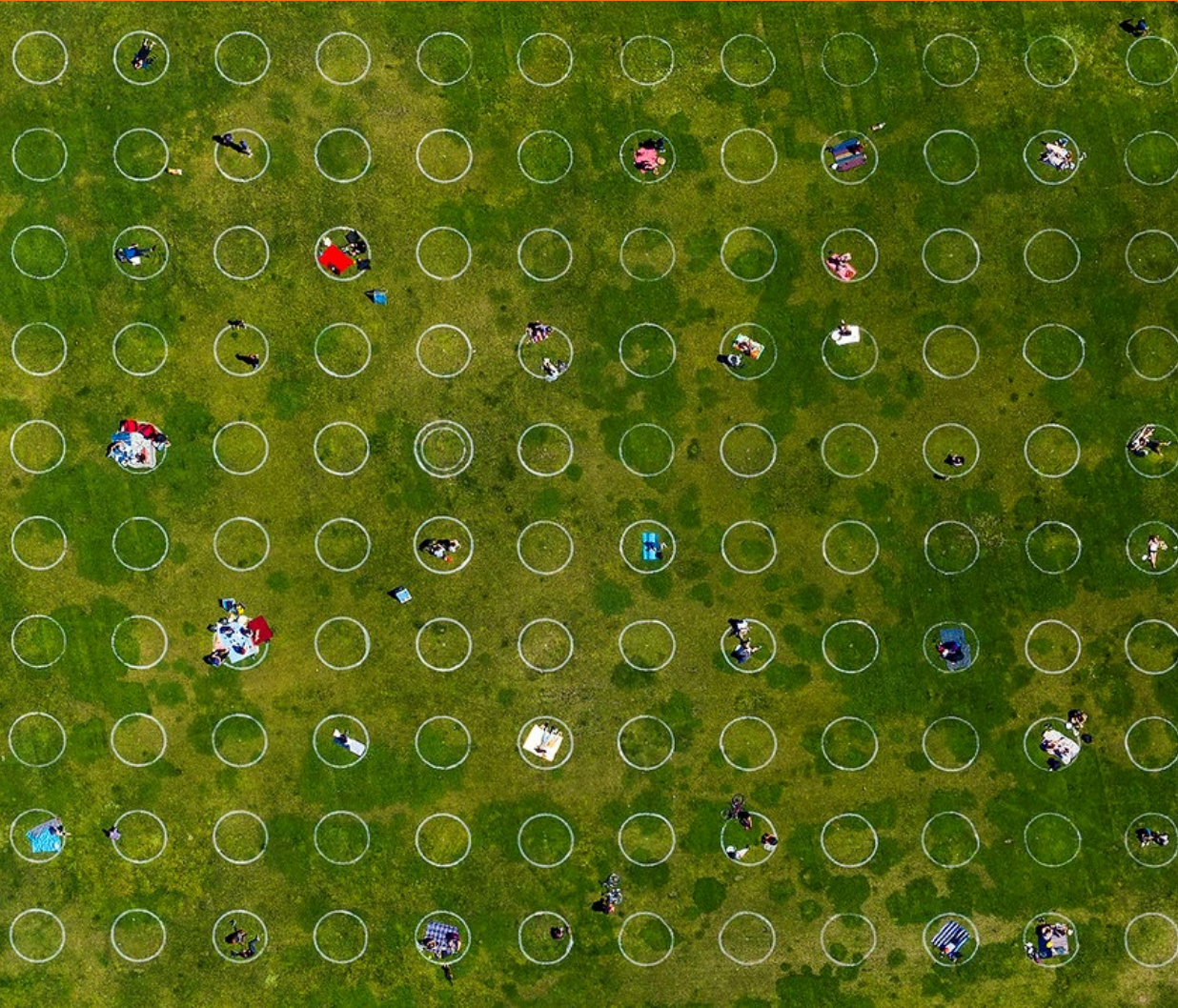


# Background

- In 2016, San Francisco launched the first city-focused HCV elimination strategy in the US
- End Hep C SF is a multisector consortium, independent from the health department
- Uses principles of Collective Impact
- As of 2021 more than 190 individuals and 38 organizations have signed on as members



# COVID-19



- On March 16, 2020, San Francisco's health officer issued a "shelter in place" order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- This effectively halted almost all HCV outreach, testing, and treatment efforts in the city

# COVID-19

- Members of End Hep C SF continued to meet virtually
- By summer of 2020 most workgroups had resumed regular meetings

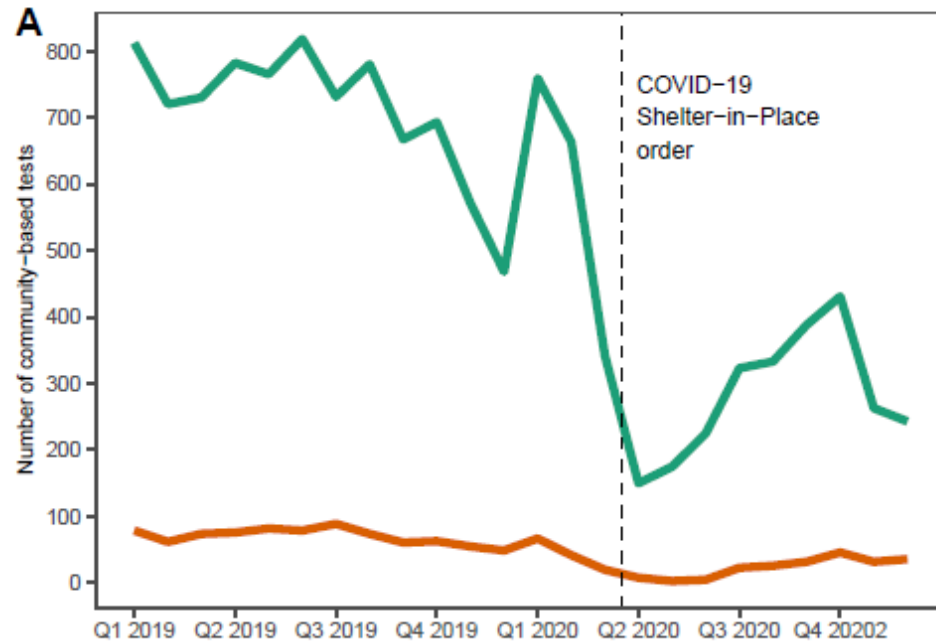




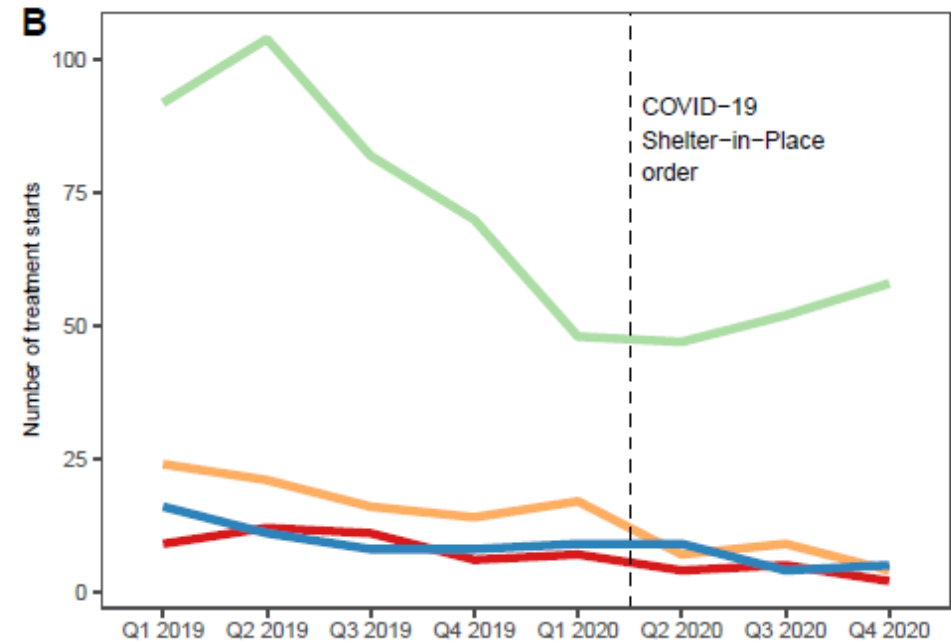
What did we see?

# HCV Antibody Tests (A) and Treatment Starts (B)

1



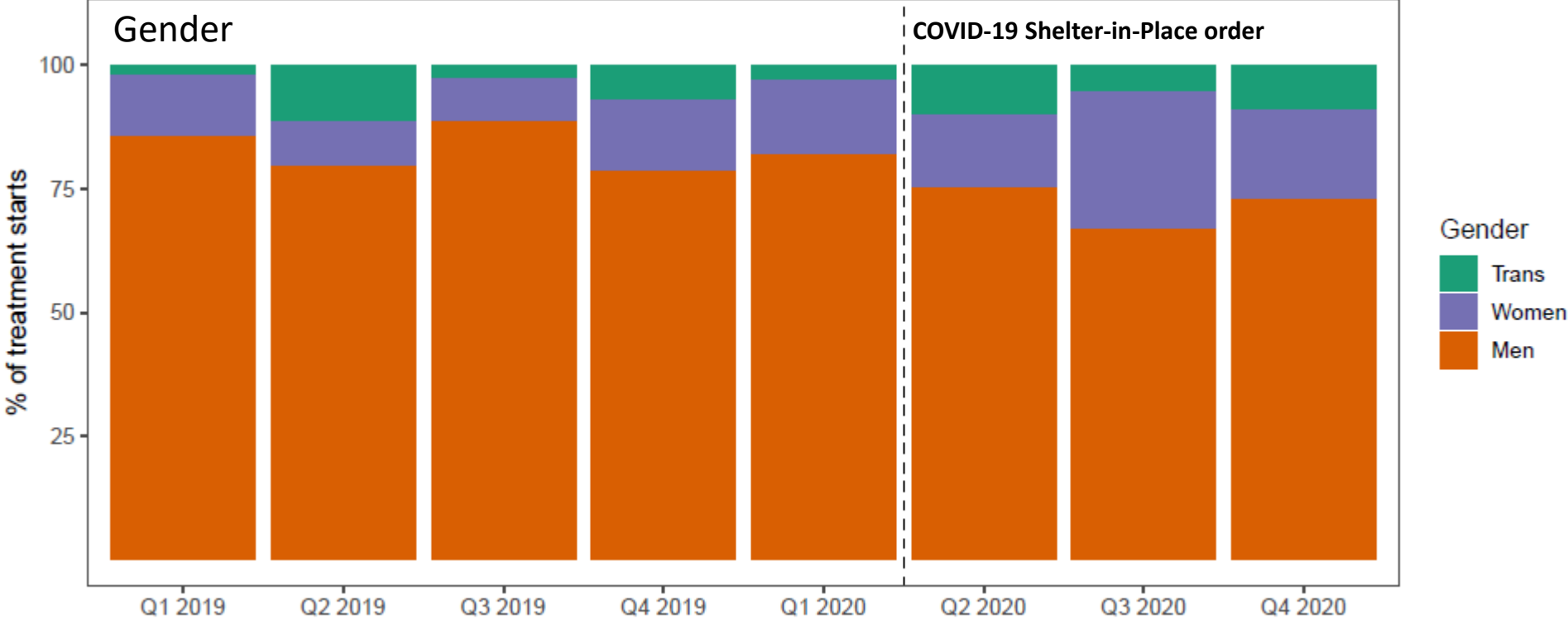
— Total Ab tests — Ab reactive tests



— OTOP — SFAF — SFHP — Ward 86

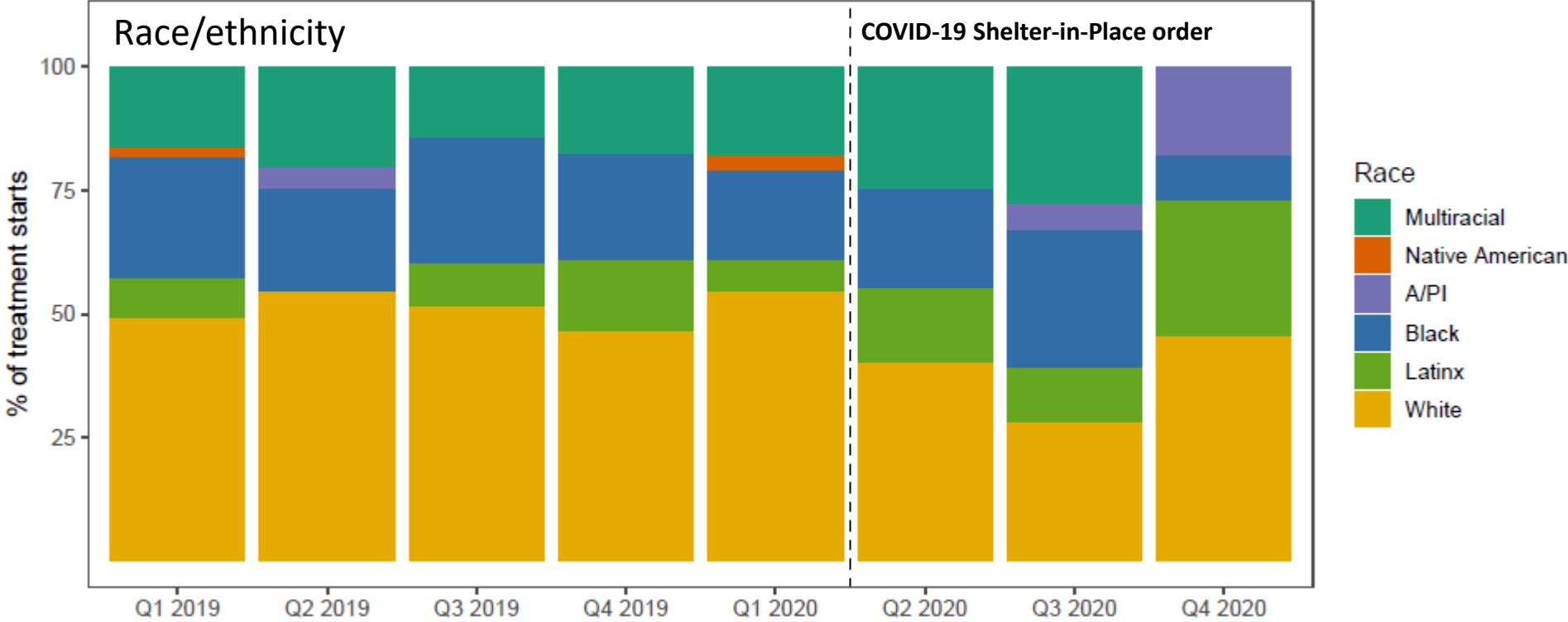
# Demographics of people initiating treatment

2



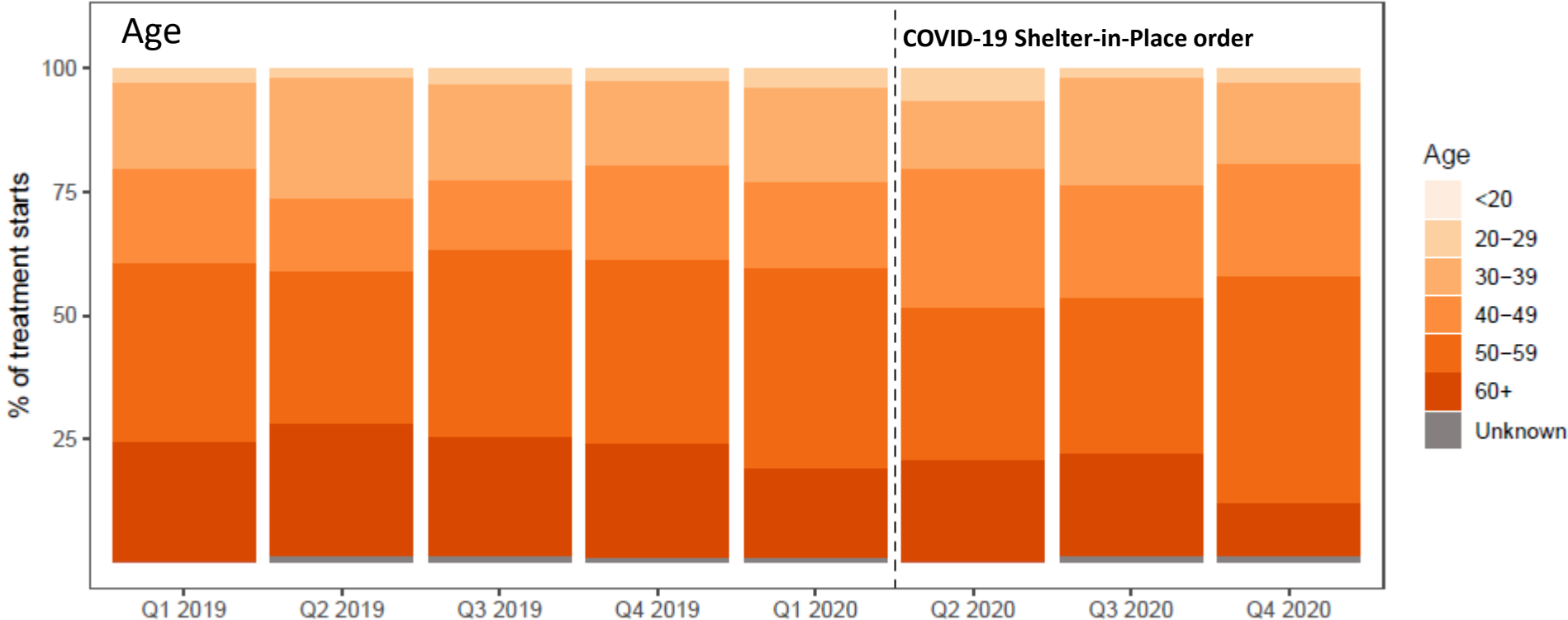
# Demographics of people initiating treatment

2



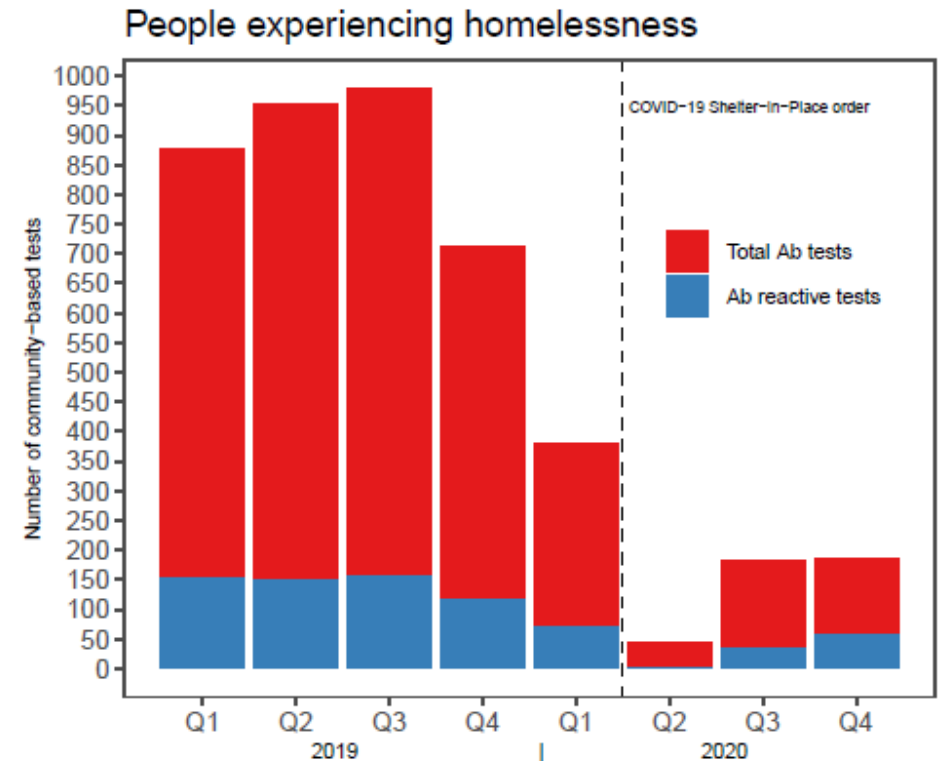
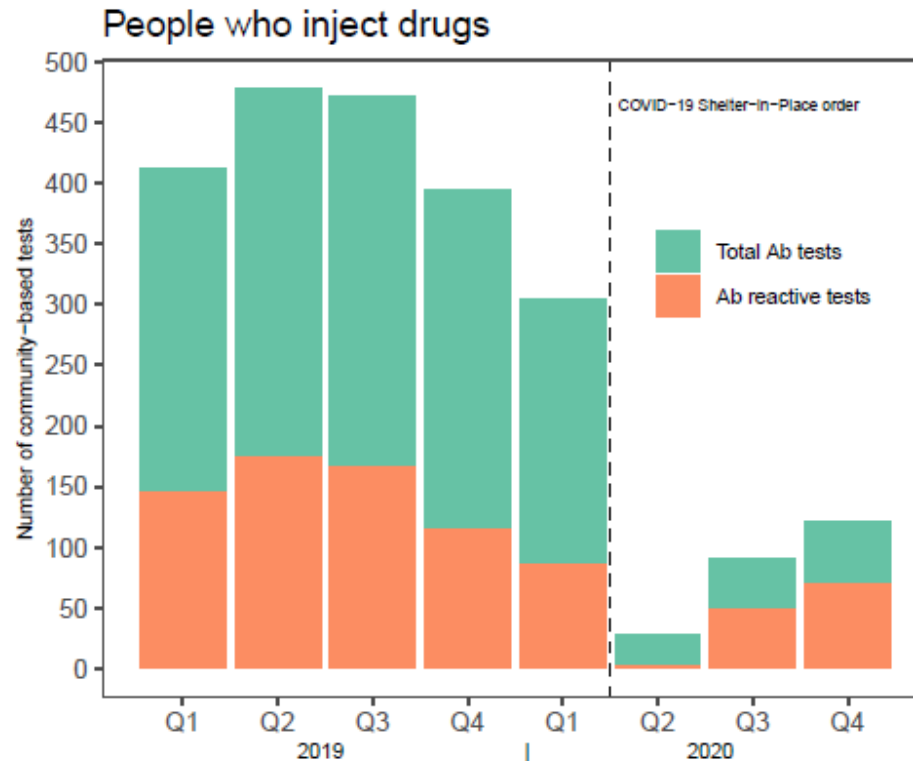
# Demographics of people initiating treatment

2



# Community-based antibody testing among PWID and people who are experiencing homelessness

3



# Qualitative reflections

## 4

### Continuous Communications (CC)

Definition: Constant communication exists not only within the Coordinating Committee and between partners but also with the community.

**Theme 5: EHCSF has maintained strong communication among members, keeping members informed and engaged, even as in-person meetings went virtual.**

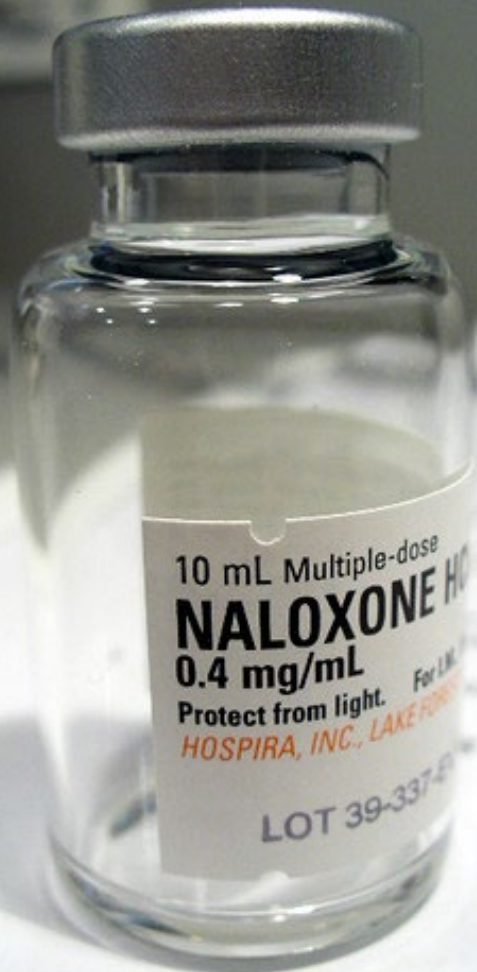
During the pandemic, EHCSF has managed to keep members in touch with each other and keep communication channels open so everyone can continue to engage in conversations related to HCV. EHCSF has used Zoom meetings, Groupsite, EHCSF's website, emails and other virtual communication channels to keep communication open among members, even though in-person activities had to be cancelled. That has been great.



What did we learn?

# People who inject drugs are at high risk for *both* HCV and COVID-19

"Narcan" by [PunchingJudy](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)



- Forced isolation and a reduction in supportive services for PWID - especially those who are unstably housed - has been a real problem
- 713 people died of an accidental drug overdose in San Francisco in 2020, a 61% increase over 2019.

# People who are unhoused are at high risk for *both* HCV and COVID-19

- As of April 30 2021, 1654 residents across 304 SROs in San Francisco have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2
  - 412 of those in city-run "Shelter in Place" hotels



1

HCV treatment can still be initiated, through sites providing essential services.



We found that services could be offered via outreach workers, or medical assistance working on a van, with a prescribing clinician available via telehealth services

2

Research studies offered a good opportunity for testing or treatment.

Studies funded by NIH or pharmaceutical foundations may be more easily able to pivot and safely enroll people as participants, where they might otherwise fall through the cracks of a community organization under staffing furloughs during COVID-19

**GET PAID**

**FREE**  
**HEP C**  
**TESTING +**  
**TREATMENT**

**MON & THURS 2PM-6PM**  
**WED 12:30PM-2:30PM**  
**65 9TH ST**

415-633-6534

**CALL TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT or**  
**DROP-IN AT OPENING: FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED**



3

HCV screening and linkage to care can be offered alongside COVID-19-related initiatives.



Community organizations were able to partner with the health department to help provide HCV testing or treatment initiation at COVID-19 testing or vaccination sites, or vice versa

4

Be flexible, and look for silver linings.

San Francisco's unprecedented effort to provide longer-term shelter for unhoused people through Shelter-in-Place hotels led to an opportunity to initiate HCV treatment, while hotel residents had stable housing for the first time in many years

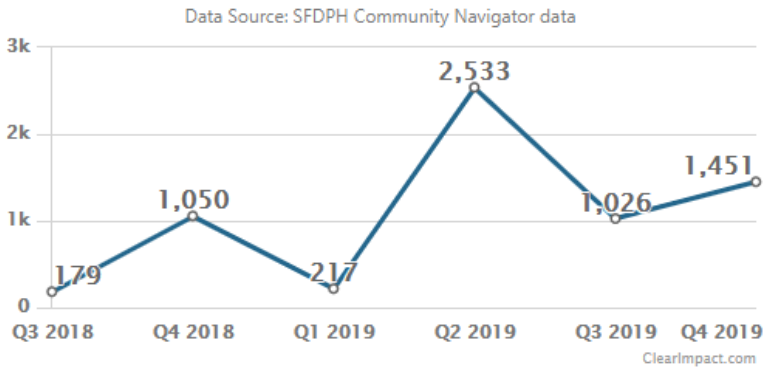


# 5

# Leverage public demand for COVID-19 data for HCV!

## PTL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Icon	Category	Measure Name	Time Period	Current Actual Value	Current Trend	Baseline % Change
+ P	EHCSF	Antibody Testing - EHCSF (P)				
+ P	EHCSF	Positivity Rate - EHCSF				
- P	EHCSF	RNA Testing - EHCSF				
+ PM	EHCSF	# of confirmatory RNA tests	Q4 2020	34	↘ 1	-36% ↘
- P	EHCSF	Navigation - EHCSF				
- PM	EHCSF	# of interactions by hep C navigators	Q4 2019	1,451	↗ 1	711% ↗
			Q3 2019	1,026	↘ 1	473% ↗
			Q2 2019	2,533	↗ 1	1315% ↗
			Q1 2019	217	↘ 1	21% ↗
			Q4 2018	1,050	↗ 1	487% ↗
			Q3 2018	179	→ 0	0% →



End Hep C SF is now working with Data SF to improve use and visibility of HCV data moving forward

<https://endhepcsf.org/evaluation-dashboard/>

6

Partnerships have value in times of crisis - don't forget to connect.

Instead of cancelling End Hep C SF meetings because people were overwhelmed, we found that regular connection through virtual workgroup meetings was a lifeline for our providers



# Thank you!

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Photo credit: Noah Berger/AP Photo



## Hep Can't Wait!

